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Show, don't tell. Education and historical representations on stage and screen in Germany and the USA

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"Are you not entertained?" – Education, Entertainment, and Historical Representations on Stage and Screen in Germany and the USA, an Introduction

In 2000, Ridley Scott revived the presumed dead swords-and-sandal movie genre with his Oscar-winning movie *Gladiator*. In this film, the Roman general Maximus, played by Russell Crowe, is to succeed the dying emperor Marcus Aurelius, (Richard Harris). But his son Commodus, played by Joaquin Phoenix, wants to prevent this. He kills his father and orders the execution of Maximus and his family. Maximus manages to escape and is captured by slave traders. Thereafter, he must fight as a gladiator. In the end, he arrives at the Coliseum and takes revenge on Commodus.

The movie is probably less inspired by ancient history than by film history. It is "reel history" rather than "real history." Commodus' death at the end of the movie is inspired by Anthony Mann's *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964), starring Christopher Plummer as Commodus. Scott confessed that epic movies from the 1950s and 1960s like *Ben Hur* (1959) or Stanley Kubrick's *Spartacus* (1960) heavily influenced his visuals. David Franzoni, the screenwriter of *Gladiator*, even noted that the film itself was partly about modern anxieties over the power of popular entertainment.[1] He noted that "[t]he movie is about us. It's not just about ancient Rome, it's about America."[2] Maybe that explains why Harvard historian Kathleen M. Coleman, who worked as a historical advisor for the film, refrained from being named as such in the end credits. Although she confessed that the film increased students' interest in ancient history, she criticized it because it was not concerned with historical authenticity and did not follow the latest findings of historical research. Instead, it perpetuated a long-outdated image of antiquity originating in the nineteenth century like Jean-Léon Gérôme's painting *Police verso* (1872) or in Lawrence Alma-Tadema's artistic renderings of Roman luxury and decadence. "Is it proper to let the cinema-going public think that the past looked like our cinematic conception of it?" Coleman asked. "Will generations to come persist in believing that the cinematic fiction is what 'really happened'? If so – and this is the really

1 Monica S. Cyrino. "Gladiator and Contemporary American Society," in *Gladiator. Film and History,* ed. by Martin M. Winkler (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 125-149. 138.

2 Cyrino, "Gladiator and Contemporary American Society," 125.

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worrying question, especially on the lips of those whose bank balances are swelled by the takings at the box office – does it matter?"[3] In other words: "Are you not entertained? Is this not why you are here?"

In 2018, the Center for German-American Educational History (*Arbeitsstelle für Deutsch-Amerikanische Bildungsgeschichte*) at the University of Münster organized a lecture series in which educators, historians, and researchers discussed the question of just what audiences "learn" from historical representations on screen and stage, if movies, plays, and TV shows form, influence, and shape historical consciousness and how theater, television, and cinema can "teach" history and historical thinking. These questions aim at the complicated relationship between entertainment and education, excitement and enlightenment surrounding historical representation in popular media. Screen and stage plays use history to tell thrilling and insightful stories, to reflect on the human condition and – if nothing else – to sell entertainment. These productions are no documentaries, but dramatic representations of historical events, persons and circumstances.

With the title "Show, Don't Tell," we emphasize on the one hand the special condition of these dramatic representations of history compared to their written counterparts, such as historical novels. On the other hand, we allude to the educational dimension of "showing" in general. The German philosopher of education Klaus Prange claims that demonstrating, representing, or showing something to someone is at the heart of any educational action.[4] Although not every act of representing or showing must be considered an educational action, the question stands whether historical representations on screen and stage have an educational dimension to consider. Even so, movies, TV shows, and other dramatic representations of history contribute to our historical consciousnesses and our cultural identities, which are not irrelevant for understanding education in societies. Therefore, the contributions in this volume illustrate and analyze historical representations in popular dramatic media as a part of the historical cultures of Germany and the USA and show how theater and moviemakers use history to engage audiences in memory culture, influence historical consciousness, and connect present issues and prospects of the future with their interpretations of historic events, characters, and circumstances.

In the first contribution Tim Zumhof, researcher at the Institute for Educational Research at the University of Münster, presents various theoretical and practical approaches from the US and Germany that tackle the question of how people and societies deal with their histories. He identifies similarities and differences between concepts like public history, popular history, and historical culture and asks

3 Kathleen M. Coleman. "The Pedant goes to Hollywood: The Role of the Academic Consultant," in *Gladiator. Film and History*, ed. by Martin M. Winkler (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 45-52. 50.

4 Klaus Prange. "Über das Zeigen als operative Basis der pädagogischen Kompetenz," *Bildung und Erziehung* 48.2 (1995): 145-158.

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whether they reflect on the educational dimension of historical representations in popular media. He also addresses research desiderata, hints at possibilities of interdisciplinary research, and describes the history of historical cultures as a neglected subject for the History of Education field.

Although German academics long-ignored popular culture, there has been a long-standing German tradition which considers theater an educational and moral institution. From Friedrich Schiller to Bertolt Brecht, theater reformers thought about theater as an important aid for educating people about the human condition, social change, and other pressing issues by using historical settings. However, German author Lion Feuchtwanger, who is famous for his historical novels and plays, was very skeptical of Brecht's educational efforts through his Epic Theater concept. Nevertheless, in his essay, Jürgen Overhoff, Professor for History of Education at the University of Münster, shows how Feuchtwanger's attitude towards educational aspirations changed through his experience with the rise of fascism in Germany. Feuchtwanger's play *Waffen für Amerika* (1946), which he wrote after he fled from Nazi Germany to the USA, deals with the Franco-American military alliance of 1778 against the British in the War of Independence. At the same time, he implies certain parallels to current events. For Feuchtwanger, the forging of a military alliance of Britain, the USA, and the Soviet Union against Nazi Germany was a callback to this earlier European-American cooperation in transatlantic history. The lesson Feuchtwanger wants his audience to learn from this history is to find confidence in the human progress achieved through the European-American alliance and that despite all chauvinistic abuses, both sides of the Atlantic will in the end prevail.

Since the earliest days of theater, playwrights have drawn ideas and inspiration from history. The most famous example is, of course, William Shakespeare. At the beginning of his career, he wrote eleven plays about English history thanks to the availability of serious historical works like Edward Hall's *The Union of the Two Noble and Illustre Families of Lancaster and York* (1548) and Raphael Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* (1577/1587). However, the British popular historian Dan Jones reminds us: "What we should always remember is that Shakespeare wrote plays primarily to entertain – his plays were never supposed to comprise a history lesson, but simply drew an audience by virtue of its historical setting."[5] He often used history as an allegory to comment on events of his own time, he was biased in his descriptions and characterizations of historical figures, and wrote his plays in the historical boundaries of specific dramatic traditions and under specific social conditions.

5 Dan Jones. "Shakespeare: did he get his history right?" 2013, *The Daily Telegraph,* URL: https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/theatre/william-shakespeare/10106855/Shakespeare-did-he-get-his-history-right.html (accessed November 12, 2019).

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In his play *Duell an der Havel* (1954), the German playwright Fritz von Unruh even took the liberty to imagine a fictional encounter between historic figures like Frederick the Great of Prussia and President George Washington. In his play, Unruh attempts a difficult mediation between opposing models of Enlightenment governance and the opposition of freedom and duty. Although historic events in Unruh's play are completely invented and staged, Simon Richter, Professor for Germanic Languages and Literatures at the University of Pennsylvania, argues that the play holds up as a way of thinking about the complex history of the transatlantic relationship between Germany and the United States, from Washington and Fredrick the Great to Trump and Merkel.

Even if screenwriters and playwrights consider Mark Twain's remarks on writing fiction – to get your facts first, and then distort them as much as you please –,[6] it is no guarantee of any historical authenticity. Historical representations on stage and screen can nevertheless create an "authentic atmosphere"[7] which depends on visual details like costumes, artifacts, and architecture. It depends upon the ideology and behavior of characters and a plot that fits into a historical context. Nevertheless, "historical authenticity"[8] is certainly not the main goal of dramatists, in contrast to creating a historical documentary. Historical authenticity in popular media has to be harmonized with aesthetic and dramatic considerations.[9] With concepts like documentary theater (*Dokumentartheater*), theater-makers challenge historical authenticity and try to make historical sources accessible on stage. Since 2007, students of the Institute of History at the University of Bremen, Germany, and actors from the Bremen Shakespeare company (bsc) have developed and staged dramatic readings of historical documents under the title *Staging Files*. The German historian Eva Schönk-Quinteros developed the concept for this unique project which combines historical and dramaturgical work. Its aim is to make files and historical documents "speak" on stage, to make source-based research accessible to a broad public, and to address current political issues. The dramatic reading is ideal for these purposes because it relies heavily on the language of the documents and allows presenting historical texts without additional explanations, comments or interpretations.[10] In 2016, Alissa Rubinstein, a public historian and playwright working in Berlin, created another unique theater project based on collected sources. Her play *The 614th Commandment* is a result of over two years of research on the intersections of public history, documentary theater, and Jewish collective memory undertaken

6 See Rudyard Kipling. *From Sea to Sea: Letters of Travel*. Vol. 2. (London: Doubleday & McClure Company 1899), 180.

7 Coleman, "The Pedant goes to Hollywood," 47.

8 Coleman, "The Pedant goes to Hollywood," 47.

9 Coleman, "The Pedant goes to Hollywood," 48.

10 Sigrid Dauks. '*Aus den Akten auf die Bühne*': *Inszenierungen in der archivischen Bildungsarbeit* (Berlin: BibSpider, 2010).

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as part of Rubinstein's Master's thesis research for her Public History degree at the Free University of Berlin. The play itself is based on over 200 interviews conducted with American Jews in Los Angeles, California. Rubinstein was inspired to embark on this project because of her both her own family history as well as her own experiences living in Berlin. Both the essay and the play deal with the intergenerational passing down of historical trauma and memory and ask how – or if – remembering such painful history can ever become less painful.

In addition to documentary theater, performances that reenact historical events with amateur actors prove to be a form of historical theater that keeps memories alive. Therefore, Jens Roselt and Ulf Otto recently described theater as a "time machine" in their anthology of the same name.[11] Looking at the historical re-enactments at the Offenburger Freedom Festival[12] in Germany or Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, Wolfgang Hochbruck, Professor for North American Studies at the University of Freiburg, draws attention to the entangled German-American history of the Civil War and discusses the limits and possibilities offered by historical reenactments for history and civic education. He argues that besides the accepted forms of experimental archeology and living history programs in open-air museums, historical theater – with students both as actors and audiences in live-action roleplay – can create positive effects for school curriculum-based learning processes.

Even commercial theaters now offer a variety of educational programs for their historical theater productions which provide historical backgrounds and contexts for the plays and enrich regular theater experiences with aspects of historical learning. Stephanie Johns, educator at Canada's largest theater festival – the Stratford Festival –, presents a variety of techniques for teaching complicated histories in conjunction with the current playbill. For example, for the stage play adaptations of *The Diary of Anne Frank* or Harper Lee's *To Kill A Mockingbird*, the Stratford Festival arranged post-show chats, workshops, and prologues. In her contribution, Johns talks about her experiences with this educational framework program and reflects on the impact it had on the audiences.

The second half of our volume turns to depictions of history in film and television. Since the beginning of film history, filmmakers have portrayed history on screen and generated (or reinforced) historical images. One notable example is D.W. Griffith's infamous *Birth of a Nation* (1915), which perpetuates racist Lost Cause myths and promotes the Ku Klux Klan. Film historian Bruno Ramirez argued that then-president Woodrow Wilson's praise of the film "could also be taken as an in-

11 See Jens Roselt and Ulf Otto ed., *Theater als Zeitmaschine. Zur performativen Praxis des Reenactments. Theater- und kulturwissenschaftliche Perspektiven* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2012).

12 Stadt Offenburg. "Offenburger Freiheitsfest," URL: https://www.offenburg.de/html/content/offenburger_freiheitsfest.html (accessed November 12, 2019).

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formal validation of the new medium's power to 'write history.'"[13] Since the 1990s, academics have increasingly analyzed films in their own right from the perspectives of history, aesthetics, education, and memory studies. In their groundbreaking study *The Presence of the Past* (1998), Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen note that film and television are the most common way Americans encounter history.[14] Robert Rosenstone, a film historian and strong advocate for the medium's potential, has argued that other historians should learn to "read" film and that "[f]ilms seem simple because on a surface level they are so easy to watch."[15] For him, films "expand the vocabulary with which we think and write history upon the page."[16] Other scholars such as Alison Landsberg, have argued that modern mass culture implants "prosthetic memories" of historical events in diverse and diffuse audiences; the advantage of this phenomenon is that it can help foster historical empathy for "foreign" historical actors or minority groups.[17] Three of our contributions analyze films that depict the Second World War and the Holocaust. In line with earlier work on "prosthetic memory" and "cosmopolitan memory," these pieces trace how films create historical images and influence historical memory for global audiences widely removed from the original events' national contexts.[18] This is not to say that films are infallible or are have surpassed traditional written history – one only needs to look at the previous example of *Gladiator* to be disabused of that notion – but nevertheless, historical films and television series are here to stay.

Felix Apel begins the remainder of this volume by discussing the concept of historical images and how storytelling conventions pioneered in early twentieth-century Hollywood became global practices. His contribution uses the film *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer* (2015) as a case study for the creation and transmission of historical images on film. The film, a dramatization of Fritz Bauer's involvement with the capture of Adolf Eichmann, explores the Attorney General's life before he served as lead prosecutor at the Frankfurt Auschwitz Trials (1963-1965). Apel analyzes the ways that *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer* utilizes storytelling techniques pioneered in Hollywood to construct historical images of the Hessian Attorney General while simultaneously perpetuating well-worn myths about Bauer's private life. For Apel, the film exemplifies our current globalized film culture, where differences in na-

13 Bruno Ramirez. *Inside the Historical Film* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 21.

14 Roy Rosenzweig and David Paul Thelen. *The Presence of the Past: Popular Uses of History in American Life* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 31.

15 Robert A. Rosenstone. "The Reel Joan of Arc: Reflections on the Theory and Practice of the Historical Film." *The Public Historian* 25.3 (2003): 61–77. 70.

16 Rosenstone, "The Reel Joan of Arc," 77.

17 See Alison Landsberg. *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), and *Engaging the Past: Mass Culture and the Production of Historical Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

18 See Daniel Levy and Natan Sznaider. "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory." *European Journal of Social Theory* 5.1 (2002): 87-106.

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tional filmmaking styles have largely fallen by the wayside in favor of films that appeal to more global, transnational audiences connected to streaming services and no longer dependent on the theatrical distribution model.

Historical images originally meant for one national audience can nevertheless influence audiences worldwide. In his contribution, Thorsten Carstensen, Associate Professor of German at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), analyzes the transatlantic transfer of historical images at the microlevel. His contribution explores how John Ford's depiction of the American West profoundly influenced Austrian writer Peter Handke, winner of the 2019 Nobel Prize in Literature. Handke's work is full of direct and indirect references to John Ford's life and work. Ford was a pioneer of the Western genre and greatly contributed to cementing the West as the American epic myth. Handke's ideas about America and the West, as well as many aspects of his artistic life, can be directly traced to the cinema of John Ford, which is characterized by everyday people, the epic landscapes of Monument Valley, and the bonds that hold communities together. For Handke, John Ford served as his teacher; watching Ford's films was an educational experience about both American history and life itself. Ford's depictions of the American West imbued Handke with a "prosthetic memory" of the American West without having experienced it firsthand.[19] By examining John Ford's reception at the microlevel, Carstensen illustrates the power historical images can have over diverse audiences.

Most work on historical films ignores the role of critics. Raymond J. Haberski, Professor of American Studies and History at IUPUI, continues Carstensen's focus on the reception of historical films but shifts it towards film critics and historical memory. This article examines the film historian and critic Richard Schickel's negative reception of Hollywood war films, particularly William Wyler's *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946). For Haberski, critics like Richard Schickel miss the mark when they deride war films such as *The Best Years of Our Lives* as jingoistic and unrealistic lies because they expect too much from the Hollywood dream factory and fall into the trap of casting themselves as crusaders for truth against patriotic propaganda. Haberski argues for a more nuanced approach towards war films which treats audiences with respect instead of as passive consumers unwittingly accepting every fiction Hollywood delivers them. This contribution argues for an acknowledgment of the historical context in which films like *The Best Years of Our Lives* were made and a more balanced approach for analyzing Hollywood's depiction of World War II.

The final contribution examines the production history of *Conspiracy* (2001), a dramatization of the 1942 Wannsee Conference. In his piece, Nicholas K. Johnson, Deputy Head of the Research Center for German-American Educational

19 See Alison Landsberg. *Prosthetic Memory: The Transformation of American Remembrance in the Age of Mass Culture* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

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History at the University of Münster, uses archival sources such as script drafts, meeting minutes, and correspondence in order to trace just how filmmakers create historical images. This piece critically assesses *Conspiracy* as a case study for how filmmakers responsibly make complex and difficult histories accessible to wide audiences while largely avoiding cliché and sentimentality. Furthermore, as an Anglo-American production, *Conspiracy* also serves as an example of how Americans have depicted a key event from "German" history that had global impact.

In summary, all of the contributions to this volume explore the depiction of history in theater and film from the intersection of historical scholarship, aesthetics, memory studies, and education. They examine the creation of historical images, film production and reception, the scriptwriting process, educational programming, and depictions of German-American encounters. Above all else, they explore how various theatrical and filmic productions *show* history rather than *tell* it.

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Tim Zumhof

Historical Culture, Public History, and Education in Germany and the United States of America. A Comparative Introduction to Basic Concepts and Fields of Research

In 2013, the German artist Christian Jankowski invited members of the Polish national weightlifting team to lift a number of massive public sculptures in the capital of Warsaw. These included several communist-era memorials, statues of Ronald Reagan and Willy Brandt, and the figure of "Syrenka" the Mermaid, a famous symbol of the city. Wearing their national colors, red and white, the Polish weightlifters struggled to elevate these bulky bronze and brick monuments, "metaphorically attempting to lift the very burden of history on to their shoulders."[1] Under the title *Heavy Weight History,* Jankowski combined photographs, documents, and a 25-minute film for an art installation which records the weightlifters' attempts at lifting monuments representing Polish history. Jankowski succeeds in disrupting and initiating debates on the still-raw history of Poland's occupation by the Nazis, as well as the country's era of Soviet domination after World War II. Jankowski's film gives a "light-hearted and socially-inclusive" complexion to his controversial undertaking of "reinvigorating locals' relationships to oft-neglected bits of Varsovian public statuary."[2]

Jankowski's art installation is an example of the broad and public interest in history worldwide. Interest in history grew in the 1980s and peaked in the second half of the 1990s: visitor counts to historical exhibitions and museums increased, and a considerable public interest in historiographical controversies (e.g. *Historikerstreit*, *Wehrmachtsausstellung*, *Enola Gay exhibition*) arose.[3] Today, people experience history in various forms, such as magazines[4], contemporary art[5], and video

1 Lisson Gallery. "Christian Jankowski: Heavy Weight History," 2014, URL: https://www.lissongallery.com/exhibitions/christian-jankowski-heavy-weight-history (accessed August 28, 2019).

2 Lisson Gallery, "Christian Jankowski."

3 See Barbara Korte and Sylvia Paletschek. "Geschichte in populären Medien und Genres: Vom Historischen Roman zum Computerspiel," in *History Goes Pop. Zur Repräsentation von Geschichte in Medien und Genres*, ed. by Barbara Korte and Sylvia Paletschek (Bielefeld: transcript, 2009), 9.

4 See Robert Thorp. "Popular history magazines and history education." *Historical Encounters: A journal of historical consciousness, historical cultures, and history education* 2 (2015): 102-112.

5 See Rebecca Bush and K. Tawny Paul. *Art and Public History. Approaches, Opportunities, and Challenges* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).

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games.[6] History has found a new popular outlet on TV and online streaming services. One could even say "that more people encounter history as 'edutainment' now than through formal education."[7] In Germany and the United States, different approaches have emerged to analyze and organize these cultural ways of "doing history."[8]

Since the 1970s, a group of German historians has attempted to widen the scope of history didactics (*Geschichtsdidaktik*) – an academic field that examines how to teach history and train history teachers. Some historians called for including research on how people encounter history outside the classroom and school curriculum. At the same time, public history became an institutionalized and diverse field of research and practice in the US. It included different ways of applying history to current issues, engaging public audiences in history and memory, and bringing the various skills of historians into use. In the following, a comparison of these theoretical reflections and practical frameworks sheds light on the question of whether and how they address educating people about history via popular media like television, cinema, and theater.

Outside the Classroom: Historical Culture

The umbrella term *historical culture* (*Geschichtskultur*, *culture historique, cultura histórica*) refers to the different ways people deal with history. It is a "holistic meta-historical concept"[9] that comprises people's relationships with the past. This means more than just historiography or a purely academic approach to history. Historical culture stands for the various manifestations of history in social life. It includes all forms and practices of representing, communicating, remembering, and experiencing history in a society. If culture is the way societies interpret, transmit, and transform reality, historical culture is the specific way in which societies relate to their pasts. By examining historical culture, we investigate the social production of historical experience and its objective manifestations.

6 See Dawn Spring."Gaming history: computer and video games as historical scholarship." *Rethinking History. Journal of Theory and Practice* 19 (2015): 207-221.

7 Barbara Korte and Sylvia Paletschek, "Historical Edutainment: New Forms and Practices of Popular History?" in *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, ed. by Mario Carretero et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 191.

8 See Stefanie Samida, Sarah Willner, and Georg Koch. "Doing History – Geschichte als Praxis. Programmatische Annäherungen," in *Doing History. Performative Praktiken in der Geschichtskultur*, ed. by Sarah Willner, Georg Koch, and Stefanie Samida (Münster: Waxmann, 2016), 4-7.

9 Maria Grever and Robert-Jan Adriaansen. "Historical Culture: A Concept revisited," in *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, ed. by Mario Carretero, Stefan Berger, and Maria Grever (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 77.

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Cultural ways of dealing with history have always been around; humans have always used different means to represent, communicate, remember, and experience history. Bernd Schönemann, Professor of History Didactics and Historical Culture at the University of Münster, pointed out that the concept of historical culture has a great diachronic depth.[10] That means that historical cultures themselves change throughout history. In other words, we can examine the history of how people looked at their histories. Behind these various ways of remembering, experiencing, communicating, and representing history lie different understandings and conceptions of history. They are specific interpretations of the relationship between the temporal dimensions of past, present, and future that determine, on the one hand, a degree of human agency, and on the other hand, the epistemological possibilities of knowing the past.

Schönemann differentiates roughly three ideal-typical conceptions: The pre-modern conception (history as use-value), which Cicero expressed prominently with the topos *Historia magistra vitae*. Here, the past serves as a depot of experiences and moral lessons to guide future-oriented actions in the present. The Prussian diplomat Joseph Maria von Radowitz (1797-1853) exemplified the modern conception (history as knowledge) in a remark on Hegel: *From history, you only learn history* ("Aus der Geschichte lernt man eben nur Geschichte"). The model character of the past collapsed and was replaced by the uniqueness of historical processes.[11] The post-modern conception (history as event), Schönemann argues, accentuates the mediation of history. You do not *learn* from history, but *experience* it in different medial ways.

However, the theoretical reflections on historical culture as a research subject first began with the West German debates on history didactics in the 1970s.[12] The discussion about widening the scope of history didactics started with Karl-Ernst Jeismann's talk on "historical consciousness in society" at the 1976 conference of German Historians (*Deutscher Historikertag*) in Mannheim and the conference for history didactics (*Tagung der Konferenz für Geschichtsdidaktik*) on "history and the public" (*Geschichte in der Öffentlichkeit*) the following year.[13] Up to this point, historical knowledge was regarded purely as the product of professional historians and questions about teaching history focused on how history teachers can efficiently transmit a traditional or prescribed canon of approved or ideolog-

10 See Bernd Schönemann. "Erinnerungskultur oder Geschichtskultur?" in *Kulturwissenschaft und Geschichtsdidaktik*, ed. by Eugen Kotte (München: Martin Meidenbauer, 2011), 58.

11 See Reinhart Koselleck. "Historia Magistra Vitae. Über die Auflösung des Topos im Horizont neuzeitlich bewegter Geschichte," in *Vergangene Zukunft. Zur Semantik geschichtlicher Zeiten,* ed. by Reinhart Koselleck (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1979), 56.

12 See Jörn Rüsen. "The Didactics of History in West Germany: Towards a New Self-Awareness of Historical Studies." *History and Theory* 26 (1987): 275-286.

13 See Rauthe, *Public History,* 167-172.

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ically-suitable content. Jeismann suggested that history didactics should expand its field of research and focus on the formation and transformation of historical consciousness (*Geschichtsbewusstsein*).[14] Since then, the term "historical consciousness" has become a key concept in history education. It does not only refer to the sheer mastery of basic historical information and the ability to argue historically, but it also depicts much more of an awareness of the historical nature of human behavior, knowledge, institutions, events, and developments in society, including one's own identity. Historical consciousness encompasses the interconnection between an interpretation of the past, an understanding of the present, and a prospect for the future. Jeismann pointed out that teaching history in schools is only one part of that which contributes to create and change historical consciousness. Hence, history didactics should include contexts outside the classroom.[15]

However, historical culture did not become a key concept within the history didactics field until the 1990s. In 1991, German historian and main proponent of the concept, Jörn Rüsen, defined historical culture as an external aspect of historical learning. He underlined the bimodal reconstruction of history and pointed out that historical learning has two sides. The inner side refers to historical consciousness (*Geschichtsbewusstsein*), the outer to historical culture (*Geschichtskultur*). Both aspects are two sides of the same coin. For Rüsen, historical consciousness refers to an individual mental structure and a coherent set of operations which emerge from processes of internalization and socialization (from the outside to the inside). It cannot be merely equated with historical knowledge of the past. It instead structures historical knowledge as a medium to understand the present and to anticipate the future. It plays an important role in mental processes that shape one's own identity and undertakes essential functions in human culture.[16] Historical culture, is otherwise a collective effort which manifests itself through externalization (from the inside to the outside). It includes institutions and organizations that form the infrastructure of historical learning. It comprises the various ways in which historical consciousness articulates itself in society: in schools and textbooks, museums and exhibitions, the culture industry and mass

14 See Karl-Ernst Jeismann. "Didaktik der Geschichte. Die Wissenschaft von Zustand, Funktion und Veränderung geschichtlicher Vorstellungen im Selbstverständnis der Gegenwart," in *Geschichtswissenschaft. Didaktik – Forschung – Theorie*, ed. by Erich Kosthorst (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Riprecht, 1977), 9-33. – For the differences, overlaps and synergies of the concepts Historical Thinking and Historical Consciousness, see Peter Seixas. "Historical Consciousness and Historical Thinking," in *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, ed. by Mario Carretero, Stefan Berger, and Maria Grever (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 59-72.

15 See Karl-Ernst Jeismann. "Geschichtsbewußtsein als zentrale Kategorie der Didaktik des Geschichtsunterrichts," in *Geschichte und Bildung. Beiträge zur Geschichtsdidaktik und zur Historischen Bildungsforschung*, ed. by Wolfgang Jacobmeyer and Bernd Schönemann (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000), 46-72.

16 See Rüsen, "The Didactics of History," 284-285.

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media, anniversary celebrations, and so on.[17] Thus, Rüsen defines historical culture as "the complete range of activities of historical consciousness."[18]
Even if individuals ignore historical monuments, refuse to participate in anniversary celebrations, or do not visit historical sites or museums, these parts of historical culture still exist. They do so independently from our personal perception; they have greater durability; they are more consistent than the historical imaginations of individuals and can even exceed the capacity of individuals to store memory and, furthermore, prevent historical amnesia.
In this case, Rüsen's concept of historical culture shows close connections to the field of memory studies and to concepts like cultural memory.[19] Since Maurice Halbwachs' and Aby Warburg's studies on collective and social memory in the 1930s, memory studies have become a field of research for historians and other scholars in the humanities. Jan Assmann, for example, differentiates between three levels of memory: individual, communicative, and cultural memory.[20] Communicative memory depends on socialization and communication, and it can be analyzed as a function of social life. It enables us to live in social groups and communities. It is characterized by its proximity to the everyday. Cultural memory is also shared by a number of people, but it is a

> kind of institution. It is exteriorized, objectified, and stored away in symbolic forms that, unlike the sounds of words or the sight of gestures, are stable and situation-transcendent: They may be transferred from one situation to another and transmitted from one generation to another.[21]

Of course, groups of people and communities do not "have" a memory, but they tend to "make" themselves one via things meant as reminders, such as monuments, museums, libraries, archives, and other mnemonic infrastructures that are anchored in time and space.[22]

17 See Jörn Rüsen. "Geschichtsdidaktik heute – Was ist und zu welchem Ende betreiben wir sie (noch)?" in *Bildungsgeschichte und historisches Lernen,* ed. by Ernst Hinrichs and Wolfgang Jacobmeyer (Frankfurt am Main: Moritz Diesterweg, 1991), 17.

18 See Jörn Rüsen. "Geschichtskultur," in *Handbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik*. 5th edition, ed. by Klaus Bergmann, Klaus Fröhlich, Annette Kuhn et al. (Seelze-Velber: Kallmeyer'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1997), 38, quoted in Grever and Adriaasen, "Historical Culture: A Concept revisited," 75.

19 See Jan Assmann. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (1995), 125-133.

20 See Jan Assmann. "Communicative and Cultural Memory," in *Cultural Memory Studies. An International and Interdisciplinary Handbook*, ed. by Astrid Erll and Ansgar Nünning (Berlin, New York: De Gruyter, 2008), 109.

21 Assmann, "Communicative and Cultural Memory," 111.

22 See Grever and Adriaasen, "Historical Culture: A Concept revisited," 79-81.

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In the past, several scholars pointed to the opposition between history and memory.[23] On the one hand, memory is present-oriented, emotionally charged, and non-universal, since it is supported by social groups and therefore constantly changing. It is entangled in conflicts of interest and struggles for power; it has a normative quality and can influence people's understanding of their identity. On the other hand, history as the product of academic discourse is bound to methodological regulations and the advancement of knowledge. Thus, historiography often does not satisfy society's need for historical knowledge providing points of reference. It tends to disconnect itself from public discourse.

Rüsen tried to overcome this rift between history and memory by redefining his concept of historical culture.[24] For heuristic purposes, he promoted a subdivision of historical culture into five ideal-typical dimensions in which historical consciousness creates meaningful orientations: He distinguishes *cognitive*, *aesthetic*, *political*, *moral* and *religious* dimensions. These aspects correlate with five fundamental anthropological operations: thinking, feeling, wanting, judging, and believing. Rüsen notes that various dimensions can intersect and overlap in different elements of historical culture. For example, historiography (or academic writing on history) is bound to methodological conventions and the pursuit of historical "truth" – therefore it is part of the cognitive dimension of historical culture. However, historiography, which uses rhetorical and stylistic devices, can be commented on from an aesthetic point of view.[25] In this sense, Rüsen states that dimensions of historical culture can intersect, suppress, or absorb each other. Because of this diversity and entanglement, Rüsen suggests that researching historical culture is a multidisciplinary task. Although he argues for establishing different fields of research like the theory, aesthetics, politics, ethics, and theology of history, he does not include an *educational* or pedagogical dimension to his subdivisions of historical culture. Rüsen does not suggest a pedagogy of history. He probably neglects this dimension because for him, historical culture already is one side of historical learning and in this regard, all aspects of historical culture are related in some way to educational questions. Nevertheless, a look from a purely educational point of view on historical cultures allows us to focus on the possibilities and limitations of intergenerational exchanges. These exchanges are by no means one-way, but rather a continuing dialogue between different generations. They are not just characterized by the way cultural content, practices, or things are handed down from

23 See Wulf Kansteiner. "Finding Meaning in Memory: A Methodological Critique of Collective Memory Studies." *History and Theory* 41 (2002): 179-197. See also David Lowenthal. "History and Memory." *The Public Historian* 19 (1997): 31-39.

24 See Jörn Rüsen. "Die fünf Dimensionen der Geschichtskultur," in *Angewandte Geschichte. Neue Perspektiven auf Geschichte in der Öffentlichkeit*, ed. by Jacqueline Nießer and Juliane Tomann (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2014), 46-57. See also Rüsen, "Geschichtskultur," 38-41.

25 Rüsen, "Geschichtskultur," 39-40.

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one generation to the next, but also by sustainably transforming these traditions. Pedagogical challenges arise where traditions no longer find any connection to the lifeworld of the younger generation. Social conflicts even develop where there is disagreement over which traditions must be preserved or transformed in which way and to what extent.

Outside Academia: Public History

While the concept of historical culture is mainly a continental approach, Public History has been an institutionalized field of research, practice, and higher education in the United States since the 1970s. "Public History refers to the employment of historians and the historical method outside of academia: in government, private corporations, the media, historical societies and museums, even in private practice."[26] It has become a "catch-all phrase that can cover any historical activity that is not regarded as academic history."[27]

In the early twentieth-century United States, long before public history became a general term for historical activities outside academia, an established network of local historians and historical societies existed. For example, historians worked for the National Park Service. In 1933, the National Park Service obtained full responsibility for national historic sites, parks and memorials. This caused an unprecedented need for trained historians who had to locate, identify, evaluate, and research possible historic sites. Likewise, many historians worked in military organizations or even in the private sector for businesses like Firestone, Coca-Cola, Ford Motor Company, and many others.[28]

Although historians working outside of academia had their own associations – like the American Association for State and local History (AASLH), the American Association of Museums (AAM) or the Society of American Archivists (SAA) –, there was neither a common ground nor a specific label for their practice.[29]

The term Public History originally appeared in the 1970s. In the wake of 1960s political activism, issues like minority rights, discrimination, and feminism increasingly influenced some historians. It triggered a new emphasis on the history of the disenfranchised, of the poor, of women, of the colonized, and of the)

26 Robert Kelley. "Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects." *The Public Historian,* 1 (1978): 16.

27 Faye Sayer. *Public History: A Practical Guide* (London: Bloomsbury, 2019), 3.

28 See Thomas Cauvin. *Public History. A Textbook of Practice* (New York, London: Routledge, 2016), 6-7.

29 See Michael C. Scardaville. "Looking Backwards Toward the Future: An Assessment of the Public History Movement." *The Public Historian* 9 (1987): 39. See also Simone Rauthe. *Public History in den USA und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Essen: Klartext, 2001) 85.

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enslaved. A consequence of this emergence of new social, feminist, and black histories was a new interest in ordinary people.[30] More and more, historians rejected the conventional practice of writing history of "great men" – of politicians, thinkers and generals. A striking symbol for this newfound interest of historians in the history of ordinary people was the approach of oral history.[31] Oral history is a way of gathering historical information about individuals, families, events, or everyday life by interviewing contemporary witnesses. This approach aims to preserve personal stories which would have otherwise been lost and tries to shed light on the experiences of people historians had previously ignored.

With this change in historical research and its links to class conflicts and racial divides, history started playing a more important role in contemporary political debates. For example, historians like C. Vann Woodward were engaged in the Civil Rights Movement. In his book *The Strange Career of Jim Crow* (1955), Woodward contended that racial segregation did not emerge immediately after the Civil War ended and that it was not embedded in the folkways of the South. He argued that race relations had instead evolved during the generation after Reconstruction – the re-integration of the southern states with the Union. This implied "a period of flux in race relations that might have yielded a different outcome, had there been different leadership or different circumstances."[32] This kind of social history highlighted the links between history, political activism, and even policymaking. In other words, history can be a powerful tool to address social injustice and inspire social progress. This new approach to historical study, which changed the estranged relationship between the public and history, was later referred to as the Public History Movement.

The institutionalization of public history began at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB)[33] and much less visibly at the Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (CMU)[34] in 1976. Alongside the economic crises at that time, a shrinking market of tenure-track jobs for historians inside academia forced many doctoral programs to decrease their numbers of students. Robert Kelley, History Professor at UCSB, attempted to expand professional employment for historians by linking historical study to the idea of a public rather than aca-

30 See Laurence Veysey. "The 'New' Social History in the Context of American Historical Writing." *Reviews in American History* 17, 1 (1979): 1-12.

31 See Cauvin, *Public History*, 7.

32 Sheldon Hackney, Anne Frior Scott, Bertram Wyatt-Brown, William S. McFeely, and Lawrence N. Powell. "C. Vann Woodward, 1908-1999: In Memoriam." *Journal of Southern History* 66 (2000): 211.

33 See Kelley, "Public History," 24-28. See also Rauthe, *Public History*, 88-95.

34 See Peter N. Stearns and Joel A. Tarr. "Curriculum in Applied History: Toward the Future," *The Public Historian 9* (1987): 111-125.

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demic career.[35] With the help of G. Wesley Johnson, Kelley established a graduate program in public history at UCSB in 1976.[36] This public history graduate studies program included "close instruction in what is the historian's principle skill, distilling research notes into a prose narrative."[37] Furthermore, students learned to work in team situations, how to work with various media, how to do mission- and community-oriented research, and how to keep their integrity "when under pressure to produce desired results rather than a history which is true to the facts."[38] In addition to the first university program in public history, G. Wesley Johnson organized the first of several conferences about public history. The conferences, organized between 1978 and 1980, led to the founding of the National Council on Public History (NCPH), which became and remains the main association for public historians in the US. Furthermore, in 1978, Johnson published the first edition of *The Public Historian*, a journal entirely devoted to public history.[39]

Today, there are more than 200 public history study programs in the US. Even in Germany, public history has recently become a field of historical research and practice.[40] German academics had previously ignored popular forms and practices of history. The idea of applying history to the public contradicted the ideal of free scholarship and pure research at German universities. As a result, public history is still in a fledgling state. Only a few universities in Germany offer study programs in public history: In 2008, the first public history graduate program started at the Freie Universität Berlin; in 2015 and 2016, the Universities in Cologne and Bochum launched their own programs. The University of Heidelberg is also launching a new public history program. These programs prepare public historians in-the-making for various assignments like preserving historic buildings, making historical documentaries, or designing historical journals, books, or exhibitions. Even consulting creators of historical – or history-based – dramas in theater and television is part of their job description.

A 2008 survey demonstrates the variety of hosting agencies and institutions for public historians in the US. For instance, museums (23.8%), state governments (9%), historical organizations (8.9%), the federal government (8.5%), research

35 See Kelley, "Public History," 19.

36 See Otis L. Graham Jr. "Robert Kelley and the Pursuit of Useful History," *Journal of Policy History* 23 (2011): 429-437.

37 Kelley, "Public History," 25.

38 Kelley, "Public History," 24.

39 See Cauvin, *Public History,* 9. See also Alfred J. Andrea. "On Public History." *The Historian* 53 (1991): 384.

40 See Martin Lücke and Irmgard Zündorf. *Einführung in die Public History* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018). See also Frank Bösch and Constantin Goschler (ed.). *Public History. Öffentliche Darstellung des Nationalsozialismus jenseits der Geschichtswissenschaft* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus, 2009). See also Simone Rauthe. *Public History in den USA und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Essen: Klartext, 2001).

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centers (5.1%), businesses (2.9%), and many more.[41] Obviously, "outside academia" describes a wide range of opportunities and employers for public historians. Nevertheless, the employment of public historians does not say anything about the nature of their work. Hence, defining the term public history is still a difficult task.

One American definition of public history exemplifies the field's shifting focus: "history for the public, about the public and by the public"[42]: "History *by* the public" refers to the tradition of local historians and the participation of ordinary people (without formal historiographical training) in historical research. This means on the one hand that ordinary people, their personal stories, and memories are the focal point of historical research. On the other hand, "history by the public" also describes collaborations between historians and non-academic audiences. Thus, historical research as "history by the public" also encompasses the history workshop movement in Britain in 1970s and the citizen science movement today.[43]

"History *about* the public" seems to be comparable to Rüsen's concept of historical culture: It concentrates on the presentation and interpretation of history in the public domain and the media and is interested in the historical consciousness of a society. While Rüsen's concept works as a theoretical framework and focuses on ideal-typical dimensions and analyzing different cultural ways of doing history, public history also includes pragmatic and professional aspects. In this sense, "history *for* the public" stands for the academic training of professional public historians to gain "historical skills and perspectives in the service of a largely non-academic clientele."[44] This use of methods and skills to practice history in the public domain is also called applied history.[45] History is applied to present issues,

41 John Dichtl and Robert B. Townsend. "A Picture of Public History: Preliminary Results from the 2008 Survey of Public History Professionals." *Perspectives on History,* September 1, 2009, URL: https://www.historians.org/publications-and-directories/perspectives-on-history/september-2009/a-picture-of-public-history (accessed September 9, 2019).

42 Charles C. Cole. "Public History: What difference has it made?" *The Public Historian* 16 (1994): 11.

43 See Raphael Samuel. (ed). *History Workshop: A Collectanea, 1967-1991: Documents, Memoirs, Critique and Cumulative Index to History Workshop Journal* (Oxford: Ruskin College, 1991). See also Sina Speit. "Public History und historische Grundlagenforschung. Das Projekt "Die Geschichte der Landesministerien in Baden und Württemberg in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus'," in *Bürger, Künste, Wissenschaft. Citizen Science in Kultur und Geisteswissenschaften*, ed. by Kristin Oswald and René Smolarski (Gutenberg: Computus Druck Satz & Verlag, 2016): 119-137. See also Alan Irwin. *Citizen Science. A Study of People, Expertise and Sustainable Development* (London, New York: Routledge, 1995).

44 Andrea, "On Public History," 381.

45 See Irmgard Zündorf. "Public History und Angewandte Geschichte – Konkurrenten oder Komplizen?" in *Angewandte Geschichte. Neue Perspektiven auf Geschichte in der Öffentlichkeit*, ed. by Jacqueline Nießer and Juliane Tomann (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2014): 63-76. – Rüsen considers

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audiences, actors, and policies. Public historians are well aware that history can be used and distorted for many different purposes. Thus, the main challenge is handling the tension "between historian's interest in educating audiences and the commercial interest in providing leisure."[46] Acknowledging the broad range of activities public historians tackle, this last aspect clearly shows an educational dimension. Public historians raise questions und unsettle established views. In this sense, they contribute immensely to civics education (*politische Bildung*).

Below the Highbrow: Popular History

"[P]ublic history is *popular* history – it is seen or read by large numbers of people and has mostly been designated for a mass audience."[47] In fact, the term popular history is sometimes used synonymously with "Public" or "Applied History." Barbara Korte and Sylvia Paletschek define popular history as "*all* forms of historical presentation in written, audio/visual, artefactual and performative modes which address a broad, non-expert audience."[48] To differentiate "Public" and "Popular" history, it might be helpful to look at historical representations and their recipients more closely.

While public history is often tied to high cultural institutions like museums, archives or libraries, popular history arises "below" the highbrow level. As part of popular culture, popular history is often presented by mass media and geared towards the interests, needs, and desires of its audiences. Normally, there is neither a curatorial or pedagogical framework, nor an educational agenda. Popular representations of history mainly pursue entertainment and economic goals. Nevertheless, they inform and educate audiences about history. They have a way of influencing attitudes towards certain topics and a considerable impact on the formation of historical consciousness. Television, for example, "has become the closest most people will get, or even want to get, to experiencing history."[49] Critics often consider popular history trivial and dumbed-down.[50] They warn of the

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the concept "Applied History" ambiguous, since it is not about actually applying historical knowledge. He therefore recommends the term "Practical History" (*Praktische Geschichte*). – See Jörn Rüsen and Juliane Tormann. "Geschichtskultur und Angewandte Geschichte," in *Angewandte Geschichte. Neue Perspektiven auf Geschichte in der Öffentlichkeit*, ed. by Jacqueline Nießer and Juliane Tomann (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2014), 58-62.

46 Cauvin, *Public History,* 13.

47 Ludmilla Jordanova. *History in Practice.* 2nd edition (London: Hodder Education, 2006). 126.

48 Korte and Paletschek, "Historical Edutainment," 195.

49 Sayer, *Public History*, 92.

50 See Janet Coles and Paul Armstrong. "Dumbing down history through popular culture: communities of interest or learning as consumption?" *37th Annual SCUTREA Conference*. Queen's Univer-

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immersive experience that hinders opportunities to evaluate the presented historical interpretations critically. With words like "Docutainment" or "Edutainment," critics frequently point out the problematic combination of historical documentation and entertainment with respect to the tension between educating audiences and the requirements of drama.[51]

In Germany, academic scholars long ignored or frowned upon entertaining and popular forms of history and popular culture in general. The educated classes in Germany used to define themselves more rigorously against everything "popular" than their American counterparts did, and this was supported by the rejection of mass culture promoted by leading intellectuals, most notably Theodor W. Adorno. He bemoaned that leisure time had fallen into the hands of an omnipresent entertaining machine, which he dubbed the "culture industry": modern films, television, radio, and magazines seemed, for Adorno, almost designed to keep audiences distracted, unable to understand themselves, and without the will to change social reality.

Nevertheless, this kind of criticism neglects and demotes the audience's perspective and its critical abilities. Adorno's one-sided view on popular culture reduces audiences to "victims" of the culture industry. However, audiences are not merely passive consumers, but rather creative recipients. Adorno's depiction of popular culture ignores that different media and genres not only *affect* audiences differently; it overlooks the fact that viewers and readers *use* popular culture for various reasons and under changing circumstances.[52] Furthermore, this type of one-sided research often only analyzes the historical accuracy of popular representations of history and completely neglects aesthetic aspects.[53]

At the 2006 Conference of German Historians (*Deutscher Historikertag*) in Konstanz, scholars addressed the popularization of history in television. However, it would be an oversimplification to dismiss popular history merely as popularization or entertainment. Indeed, the use, effects, forms, and history of popular historical representations are a multilayered phenomenon which requires a multi- and interdisciplinary analysis: This new development received considerable input from the field of cultural studies, as well as literary, visual, media, and performance studies.

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sity, Belfast, Northern Ireland, 2007. URL: http://www.leeds.ac.uk/educol/documents/163834.htm (accessed July 10, 2019).

51 See Oliver Näpel. "Historisches Lernen durch 'Dokutainment'? – Ein geschichtsdidaktischer Aufriss. Chancen und Grenzen einer neuen Ästhetik populärer Geschichtsdokumentationen analysiert am Beispiel der Sendereihen Guido Knopps." *Zeitschrift für Geschichtsdidaktik* 2 (2003): 233-235.

52 See David Morley. *Television, Audiences and Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1992), 173-197.

53 Gerhard Paul. "Einführung," in *Zeitgeschichte – Medien – Historische Bildung*, ed. by Susanne Popp, Michael Sauer, Berrina Alavi, Marko Demantowsky, Gerhard Paul (Göttingen: V&R unipress, 2010), 194.

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Today, researchers acknowledge that popular historical representations are narrativized, dramatized, personalized, and emotionalized.[54] "Nevertheless," Mario Carretero, Stefan Berger, and Maria Grever state, "it is striking that the research agendas of historical discipline, the philosophy of history, history education and popular historical culture are still separate."[55] It seems to be necessary on the one hand to reevaluate the relationship between academic history, popular media, and education, while on the other hand, the misleading notion of films and television teaching audiences lessons from history clearly needs to be revised.

Research Levels of Historical Representations in Popular Media and Education

A juxtaposition and comparison of the North American tradition of public history with the development of German history didactics, especially the concept of historical culture, reveals different emphases, deficits, and overlaps. At the same time, a synopsis of the different approaches illuminates four ideal levels for researching historical representations in popular media and their ties to education: a *multi-disciplinary* and *analytical*, a *socio- or culture-theoretical*, a *pragmatic*, and a *historiographical* level.

On the analytical level, first of all, a substantive and formal investigation of the medium (play, film, or television series) takes place. In this case, the analysis should not be concerned with checking the correctness of the historical events presented, but rather with examining the aesthetic and medial means of producing historical authenticity. The second level explores how viewers perceive the medium, what effects it has on them, and how they evaluate it. The aim is to determine which historical images shape their ideas of history, whether these images influence their interpretation of the present, and whether they have an influence on their anticipations of the future. Additionally, this level can ask if the audience's prior historical knowledge is called into question by these images. On the third level, pragmatic considerations can be made about how the medium can become educational in order to foster historical learning. It can also be asked if the medium should be accompanied by additional educational measures. Finally, these examination steps can be historicized themselves. If the medium is not a contemporary production, then at the final level of investigation, its historical context may be used to ask how history has been made accessible. All these levels

54 See Korte and Paletschek, "Historical Edutainment," 195.

55 Mario Carretero, Stefan Berger, and Maria Grever. "Introduction: Historical Cultures and Education in Transition," in *Palgrave Handbook of Research in Historical Culture and Education*, ed. by Mario Carretero, Stefan Berger, and Maria Grever (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 2.

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of investigation can be found in the following contributions to this anthology in one way or another.

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Jürgen Overhoff

"Geschichte ist etwas Fließendes." Lion Feuchtwanger's Changing Understanding of History and the Role of the Stage: From his Earliest Theatrical Productions to his Play *Waffen für Amerika* (1943/44)

Biographical Background – A Predilection for History

Lion Feuchtwanger[1] was one of the best known and the most successful German-speaking writers of the twentieth century. English translations of his novels reached millions of readers, especially in the United States of America, the land of his exile, where Feuchtwanger died in 1958 near Los Angeles in his marvelous and more than stately home, the Villa Aurora in Pacific Palisades, a house designed in the grand Spanish style. The sheer sight of the Villa Aurora – bought by Feuchtwanger in 1943 and now funded and maintained as an historic landmark by the Berlin-based Villa Aurora & Thomas Mann House e.V., and the Friends of Villa Aurora Inc., Los Angeles[2] – still indicates to the mindful observer how immensely rich the author had become by selling his myriad of books. If the term "best-selling author" means something, then it certainly does with regard to Feuchtwanger, a tremendously talented writer whose books turned to gold almost instantly after their release.

Despite his stunning outward success, Feuchtwanger's private life was not free from tragedy; his only daughter died as a baby, a most painful loss he never fully came to terms with. As a Jew, he was persecuted and driven out of Germany by the National Socialists after they seized power in 1933. He had anticipated this catastrophic triumph of fascism three years earlier in his novel *Erfolg* (*Success*), published in 1930.[3] Towards the end of his life, during the inglorious years of the

1 On Feuchtwanger's biography see Reinhold Jaretzky. *Lion Feuchtwanger* (Reinbek bei Hamburg Rowohlt, 1984); Andreas Heusler. *Lion Feuchtwanger. Münchner – Emigrant – Weltbürger* (Salzburg: Residenz, 2014); Wilhelm von Sternburg. *Lion Feuchtwanger. Die Biografie* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2014).

2 See Villa Aurora, URL: https://www.vatmh.org/en/artists-residence.html (accessed September 6, 2019).

3 Lion Feuchtwanger. *Erfolg. Drei Jahre Geschichte einer Provinz* (Berlin: Gustav Kiepenheuer, 1930).

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McCarthy era, long after he had moved to California, the aged author became the target of permanent suspicion as a left-wing intellectual with sympathies for democratic socialism or even Soviet Communism. In 1957, the much-troubled Feuchtwanger became ill with stomach cancer, a lethal and cruel disease. After several operations, he died from internal bleeding in late December 1958, three days before Christmas, aged 73.

Feuchtwanger's life had begun in the Kingdom of Bavaria, a proud and traditional southern state of the German Empire. He was born on 7 July 1884 in the Bavarian capital Munich, firstborn son to Orthodox Jews Johanna and Sigmund (Aaron Meir) Feuchtwanger. Sigmund Feuchtwanger's ancestors originated from the imperial free city of Feuchtwangen in Franconia, and they had experienced anti-Judaism long before the Nazis rose to power. Following a 1555 pogrom, the city of Feuchtwangen had expelled all of its resident Jews[4], some of whom found a new home in Fürth, where they were simply called "the Feuchtwangers," meaning those Jews from Feuchtwangen.[5] In the middle of the nineteenth century, it was Sigmund Feuchtwanger's father Elkan who then moved with his family from Franconia to Munich. There, in the times of the new *Kaiserreich* of 1871, when Jews enjoyed full civil rights for the first time in German history, Lion's father became a wealthy entrepreneur and owner of the well-known margarine and butter factory "Saphir-Werke."

Sigmund could now afford a comfortable lifestyle and a very decent education for all of his nine children. While Lion, the firstborn, certainly became the most prominent member of the large Feuchtwanger family, it is worth noting that his brothers Martin and Ludwig became authors, too; Ludwig's son is the British historian Edgar Feuchtwanger.[6] Two of Lion's sisters moved to Palestine following the rise of the Nazi Party. One sister, Bella, stayed in Germany; in 1943, she died in the concentration camp Theresienstadt. Another sister left Germany – like Lion, for America; she settled in New York.

Lion grew up in the Bavarian Capital; Munich was a place he liked and fondly considered his home. He identified, sometimes ironically, with the Bavarian way of life[7], and throughout his life, he spoke with a heavy Bavarian accent, even in

4 See Dietrich Weiß. *Aus der Geschichte der jüdischen Gemeinde von Feuchtwangen 1274-1938* (Feuchtwangen, 1991). 19.

5 Sternburg, *Feuchtwanger*, 16-17. More generally on Feuchtwanger's family: Heike Specht. *Die Feuchtwangers. Familie, Tradition und jüdisches Selbstverständnis im deutsch-jüdischen Bürgertum des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2006).

6 Edgar Feuchtwanger's memoirs of his childhood as a Jewish boy in the Weimar Republic appeared in 2017: Edgar Feuchtwanger and Bertil Scali. *Hitler, My Neighbor. Memories of a Jewish Childhood, 1929–1939* (New York: Other Press, 2017).

7 Rolf Selbmann describes Lion Feuchtwanger and his parents as "kulturell nicht nur Deutsche, sondern ausgesprochene Bajuwaren," see: Rolf Selbmann. "'Hat in der Geschichte nicht immer entsprochen'. Lion Feuchtwanger als Schüler des Wilhelmsgymnasiums. Zu seinem 100. Geburtstag," in

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English – but he also identified with his Jewish ancestry. In his hometown, he went to the prestigious *Wilhelmsgymnasium*, an elite school for boys, where he passed his final exam, the *Abitur*, with distinction in 1903. In addition, his father paid for a part-time home education: At least one hour per day, Lion had to study the Aramaic Talmud and the Hebrew Bible.[8] He then took up his university studies, first in Munich, and then in Berlin after 1904. As a student with a wide range of interests, he read history, philosophy, anthropology, Sanskrit, and, above all, German language and literature. He received his doctorate in 1907.

Like many German Jews with literary talents, Feuchtwanger was inspired and heavily influenced by the writings of the greatest German-Jewish author of the nineteenth century, Heinrich Heine. He was attracted by the many visible parallels[9] between Heine's Jewish existence and his own life. It therefore does not come as a surprise that Feuchtwanger wrote a careful analysis of the motives and literary strategies of Heine's 1840 fragment of a novel *Der Rabbi von Bacharach* (*The Rabbi of Bacharach*) as the subject of his PhD dissertation.[10] *Der Rabbi von Bacharach* was Heine's attempt to reflect upon his Jewish identity as a German writer by describing an episode of German-Jewish history dating back to the Middle Ages. Clearly, Heine became a role model for Feuchtwanger. Throughout his life, especially when he had successfully set himself up as an immensely popular writer, Feuchtwanger preferred to depict episodes from history – and from Jewish history in particular[11] – in order to teach his readers valuable and important lessons about the human condition.

Feuchtwanger as a Theater Critic and Playwright

Today, Feuchtwanger is best remembered as an accomplished author of historical novels – but when he started to write, he was first known as a playwright. During his years as a student, he had already become deeply interested in all sorts of theatrical

Wilhelmsgymnasium in München. Jahresbericht 1983/84, ed. by Wilhelmsgymnasium (München, 1984), 94–106. 97.

8 See Lion Freuchtwanger. "Meine Schulzeit," in *Federleichte Mädchen. Das nymphenburger Lesebuch*, ed. by Dietz-Rüdiger Moser (München: Nymphenburger, 1991), 200–202. 201.

9 Sternburg, *Feuchtwanger*, 47: "Manches, was Lion Feuchtwanger über Heines Werdegang schreibt, weist Parallelen zur eigenen Glaubens- und Lebenskrise auf."

10 Feuchtwanger's PhD-thesis was published posthumously: Lion Feuchtwanger. *Heinrich Heines "Der Rabbi von Bacherach". Eine kritische Studie* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1985).

11 Feuchtwanger wrote about very different episodes of 3000 years of Jewish history. His novels focus on episodes from the Old Testament, "Jefta und seine Tochter [Jefta and his Daughter]" (Hamburg 1957); Antiquity: "Der Jüdische Krieg [The Judean War]," (Berlin 1932); the Middle Ages, "Die Jüdin von Toledo [Raquel, the Jewess of Toledo]," (Berlin 1955); The Age of Enlightenment: "Jud Süß [Jew Süss]," (München 1925).

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productions. He composed a historical one-act play about King Saul, the legendary Old Testament ruler of Israel, reflecting on Saul's conflicts and his complicated attitude towards young David. On 21 September 1905, this play, in the Romantic style of the Irish poet Oscar Wilde, was put on stage at the Munich *Volkstheater*, but failed to convince the audience. All further performances were canceled.[12] This was a humbling experience, and Feuchtwanger was deeply embarrassed. He felt the need to learn more about other authors' successful productions before starting out anew. In the meantime, he tried to pursue a career as a professional theater critic, writing lengthy and insightful reviews of numerous plays.

Feuchtwanger soon managed to earn his living as a journalist. In 1908, he founded the culture magazine *Der Spiegel. Münchener Halbmonatsschrift für Literatur, Musik und Bühne*. The first issue appeared on 30 April. Prominent authors such as Thomas Mann, Waldemar Bonsels, or Arthur Kutscher contributed articles, reviews, and essays of the highest literary quality. Feuchtwanger himself wrote almost exclusively theater reviews, but also wrote lengthy theoretical reflections on the work of his heroes Heine and Wilde.[13] After 15 issues and six months, *Der Spiegel* merged with Siegfried Jacobsohn's famous journal *Die Schaubühne* (*The Stage*) and was later renamed *Die Weltbühne* (*The World Stage*), for which Feuchtwanger continued to write many witty and insightful feuilleton articles – around 200 pieces – on first night performances and theater premieres, mostly in Germany and Austria. The scope of his interest ranged from the productions of Max Reinhardt, the great innovator of staging techniques, design and choreography, to the much more rustic and folkloristic Oberammergau Passion Plays.[14]

In 1912, he married Marta Löffler, the daughter of a Jewish merchant. During the first year of their marriage, Marta gave birth to a daughter, Marianne, but the child tragically died only a few weeks after birth. The devastated couple tried to console themselves by traveling throughout Southern Europe. Their vagabondage lasted for two years. Sometimes they just resided somewhere on the Mediterranean coast, simply staring at the foaming waves, in order to forget. But, from time to time, Feuchtwanger also watched theater performances, wrote trenchant reviews, and sent them to Germany, to be published in the *Schaubühne*. One of these articles was dedicated to the festival of Syracuse in Sicily, praising its spectacular ancient theater, a magnificent structure preserved since the age of the Greek colonists. Feuchtwanger called this unique theater – marvelously set against

12 Hans Dahlke. "Nachwort. Lion Feuchtwanger als Dramatiker," in *Lion Feuchtwanger: Dramen II*, ed. by Hans Dahlke (Berlin: Aufbau, 1984), 685–718. 691.

13 See Lion Feuchtwanger. "Heinrich Heine und Oscar Wilde. Eine psychologische Studie," in Lion Feuchtwanger *Ein Buch nur für meine Freunde* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1984), 17-30. This article was first published in: *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 12, September 30, 1908.

14 See Sternburg, *Feuchtwanger*, 77-78.

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the horizon of the blue sea – the "most powerful theater my poor eyes have ever seen."[15]

Immediately after the outbreak of the Great War in the summer of 1914, the 28-year old Feuchtwanger moved back to Germany, where he served in the Royal Bavarian Army. He was soon released from his duties for health reasons. Still, his brief but shocking experience as a soldier decisively contributed to the development of his political stance. He became a fierce critic of the authoritarian, militaristic, belligerent, and outdated Wilhelmine Empire – and he became a wholehearted Republican. In November 1918, when Germany was defeated and the Kaiser fled to the Netherlands during the early days of the German Revolution, Feuchtwanger welcomed the establishment of the new German republic, the new German democracy – the so-called Weimar Republic.

The renowned and ambitious journalist sought to find his way in the challenging political realities of the new German republic by trying to redefine himself as a professional playwright. This time, he had more success than in the pre-war era. According to a careful count by Eckhard Schulz, Feuchtwanger's plays were performed in the "roaring" 1920s around 5,000 times on the most important stages in Germany.[16] Already during the war years, he had written three new pieces on historical episodes dating from the Renaissance to the Age of Enlightenment. Now, after the Revolution, he focused on the most recent part of history, the rapid transition from monarchy to democracy in Bavaria, Austria, and Germany as a whole.

In his play *Thomas Wendt* – finished in 1919 and renamed *Neunzehnhundertachtzehn* (1918) in 1934 – he tried to reflect upon the Revolution's decisive months. The play's protagonist, Thomas Wendt, stumbles between hope and despair. On the one hand, he rejoices: "Benevolence disseminated among humans, happiness for all men – that is the true sense of our revolution."[17] On the other hand, he begins to realize that the heroic goals of the Revolution are threatened by politicians who seek power for the sake of power. Disillusioned and embittered, he cries out: "Leave me alone. I am done with it. I do not want politics any longer."[18]

15 "[das] mächtigste Theater, das meine armen Augen je gesehen, Lion Feuchtwanger," "Aischylos, Syrakus und Reinhardt," in Lion Feuchtwanger, *Ein Buch nur für meine Freunde* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1984), 173. – This article was first published in: *Die Schaubühne*, Nr. 20, May 14, 1914.

16 Eckhard Schulz. "Lion Feuchtwanger als Dramatiker." *Volksbühnen-Spiegel* 18.7/8 (1972): 30.

17 "Güte von Mensch zu Mensch, Glück für alle, das ist der Sinn unserer Revolution," "Neunzehnhundertachtzehn. Ein dramatischer Roman," in *Lion Feuchtwanger: Dramen I*, ed. by Hans Dahlke (Berlin: Aufbau, 1984), 580.

18 "Laßt mich. Ich will nicht mehr. Ich will keine Politik mehr," "Neunzehnhundertachtzehn. Ein dramatischer Roman," in *Lion Feuchtwanger: Dramen I*, ed. by Hans Dahlke (Berlin: Aufbau, 1984), 589.

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The audience is left to decide for themselves what to think of the new political order.

While Feuchtwanger reinvented himself as an avant-garde intellectual of the new Republic, he discovered another promising young playwright, a similarly and extremely self-conscious Bavarian from the city of Augsburg. This fellow-countryman, a rising star of the literary scene in Germany, was Bertolt Brecht.[19] Feuchtwanger and Brecht became colleagues and close friends. Their friendship became lasting and permanent. For Brecht had to leave Germany after the rise of the Nazis, too, and, like Feuchtwanger, he would stay in Californian exile for many years. In the 1920s, both men started to collaborate and Feuchtwanger took a genuine interest in the drafts of Brecht's early work.

In 1924, they even wrote a play together, a history drama set in England between 1307 and 1326, *Leben Eduards des Zweiten von England* (*The Life of Edward II of England*). According to Feuchtwanger's wife Marta, her husband also suggested the titles of a number of Brecht's other works, including *Trommeln in der Nacht* (*Drums in the Night*) (originally titled *Spartakus*).[20] Feuchtwanger, a bourgeois in manner and demeanor, was often annoyed by Brecht's arrogant and somewhat undisciplined air of a laidback bohemian – but he always respected and recognized him as a true genius.[21] He also witnessed the development of Brecht's theory of the Epic Theater (*Episches Theater*) with its political and educational mission, which came to full fruition in 1926.

Feuchtwanger's Critique of Epic Theater's Educational Mission

The theory of Epic Theater was not Brecht's own original invention. He did not claim, as it were, a copyright. It was a theatrical ideal that arose around the beginning of the twentieth century from the theories and experiments of a number of avant-garde theater practitioners who responded to the political challenges of the time through the creation of a genuinely political and educational theater. Epic Theater seeks to provoke the audience's immediate reaction, forcing all those traditionally passive viewers of colorful spectacles to finally get engaged and involved in the politics of their day and age. Epic Theater is a mixture of political activism and political education.

19 Feuchtwanger writes about his first meeting with Brecht in his diary: "1919, 2. April: Ein junger Mensch bringt ein ausgezeichnetes Stück. Bert Brecht," Feuchtwanger, Lion. *Ein möglichst intensives Leben. Die Tagebücher*, ed. by Nele Holdack, Marje Schuetze-Coburn, and Michaela Ullmann (Berlin: Aufbau, 2018), 215.

20 See Sternburg, *Feuchtwanger*, 210.

21 See Sternburg, *Feuchtwanger*, 210.

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It was the German theater producer Erwin Piscator who first introduced the term "Epic Theater."[22] Piscator coined it when he became director of Berlin's Volksbühne in 1924 – exactly the same year when Brecht and Feuchtwanger began their collaboration. Piscator aimed to interest young playwrights in issues related to contemporary political life. He also asked them to stage their theatrical productions by using documentary effects, coming up with strategies to cultivate a direct response, and aiming for audience interaction. Brecht discussed the priorities and approach of Piscator's Epic Theater with Feuchtwanger. Then Brecht unified them, developed the approach, and popularized it.

Brecht's theater performances and stage plays would always include a subsequent moment of understanding and comprehension – a pedagogical moment – where he wanted to make sure that the audience got the message, sometimes by having actors speaking directly to the audience. The use of a narrator in his 1944 play *Der Kaukasische Kreidekreis* (*The Caucasian Chalk Circle*) is a prominent example of this technique. The narrator accompanies and explains the dynamics of the performance continuously. Brecht's epic approach also utilized montage techniques of interruptions, fragmentation, and contradiction.

In his best summary of the pedagogical principles of the Epic Theater, a short essay titled "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater" (Theater for Pleasure or Theater for Instruction), unpublished in Brechts's lifetime and probably written around 1936, the playwright counters all sorts of objections put forward by his critics. Contrary to their assertions, Brecht contends, an educational theater is not necessarily a boring affair. Brecht admits that "there is much that is tedious about the kind of learning familiar to us from school,"[23] but he does not find theatrical instructions similar to forms of classical schooling. "Theater remains theater even when it is instructive theater," he emphasizes, "and in so far it is good theater it will amuse."[24]

To make his point in the most persuasive manner, Brecht even refers to Friedrich Schiller, whom he considered to be one the greatest playwrights of all time. Schiller also considered the theater to be an educational and a moral institution, but in making this demand, as Brecht argues, "it hardly occurred to Schiller that

22 See Christopher Innes. *Erwin Piscator's Political Theater: The Development of Modern German Drama* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977).

23 "Unzweifelhaft ist das Lernen, das wir aus der Schule, aus den Vorbereitungen zum Beruf und so weiter kennen, eine mühselige Sache," Bertolt Brecht. "Vergnügungstheater oder Lehrtheater," in *Werke. Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe,* ed. by Werner Hecht, Jan Knopf, Werner Mittenzwei, and Klaus-Detlef Müller, Vol. 22: Schriften 2, Teil 1 (Berlin, Weimar, Frankfurt: Aufbau, Suhrkamp, 1992), 106–116. 111.

24 "Das Theater bleibt Theater, auch wenn es Lehrtheater ist, und soweit es gutes Theater ist, ist es amüsant," Brecht, *Werke*, 22. 112.

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by moralizing from the stage he might drive the audience out of the theater."[25] In fact, Schiller knew of "nothing that could give greater amusement and satisfaction than the propagation of ideas."[26] Since in Brecht's eyes, Epic Theater propagated important ideas, therefore it was both an educational and a highly amusing kind of theatrical production.

As far as the contents of his play were concerned, Brecht preferred to put episodes from history on stage. Again, he resembled Schiller, who in his "Die Schaubühne als Moralische Anstalt" had advocated the use of episodes from history in theatrical productions. If the theater shall effect, bring about, and entertain a deeply moving kind of education, then the playwright, the intendant of the theater, and the actors must be interested in presenting to the audience important episodes from the history of mankind. Then, looking back at history, we can see our own limits, our potentials, and we can draw lessons from what we have seen and experienced in the theater.[27]

In making use of history as Schiller did, Brecht liked to draw connections from a historical incident to very similar current events. This had already been the case in *Leben Eduards des Zweiten von England*, a play set in late-medieval England, and it was later masterly repeated in his famous plays *Mutter Courage und ihre Kinder* (*Mother Courage and Her Children*) and "Leben des Galilei" (*Life of Galileo*).The first play sought to reconstruct social and political affairs during the Thirty Years War in Germany, alluding to the historical context of the years 1626 to 1636; the second play was set in the first half of the seventeenth century in the Republic of Venice.

Despite their close friendship, Feuchtwanger's approach to theater differed from Brecht's style in a variety of aspects. While episodes from history played a prominent role in Feuchtwanger's plays, too – for example, *Kalkutta, 4. Mai* (*Calcutta, 4th May*) of 1925[28] – In the 1920s, Feuchtwanger did not want to teach a pedagogical lesson from history in his plays. He wanted to portray the psychological preconditions of human behavior in general; he was interested in "general psychological facts."[29] Thus, he explicitly stated that in his play *Kalkutta, 4. Mai*, he did "not want do give a straightforward representation of 18th century Anglo-Indian

25 "[Es] kam [Schiller] kaum in den Sinn, daß er dadurch, daß er von der Bühne herab moralisierte, das Publikum aus dem Theater treiben könnte," Brecht, *Werke,* 22. 114.

26 "nichts, was amüsanter und befriedigender sein konnte, als Ideale zu propagieren," Brecht, *Werke*, 22. 115.

27 Schiller's constant use and adaptation of history in his plays and writings is excellently discussed in Peter-André Alt. *Schiller. Eine Biographie*, vol. 1 (1759-1791) (München: C. H. Beck, 2000), 587-675.

28 This play is about Warren Hastings (6 December 1732 – 22 August 1818), an English statesman, who was the first Governor-General of India from 1773 to 1785.

29 "psychologische Grundtatsachen," Lion Feuchtwanger. "Vorwort zu den 'Drei Stücken'," in *Lion Feuchtwanger: Dramen II*, ed. by Hans Dahlke (Berlin: Aufbau, 1984), 666.

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politics."[30] In 1929, looking back on his theatrical productions, he stated: "Please, do not expect from my plays some sort of historical lesson."[31] Only a few years later, however, during the years of the Nazi regime, Feuchtwanger's attitude changed. His biographical experiences mattered.

Asylum – France, the Soviet Union, and the United States of America

In 1933, when Adolf Hitler became Chancellor of Germany and when the National Socialist Party ruthlessly and mercilessly persecuted the entire political opposition and, above all, the Jews, Feuchtwanger's plays were banned from the German stage – everywhere, overnight and at once. In the early 1920s, Feuchtwanger had been one of the very first to produce propaganda against Hitler and the Nazi Party in the form of satirical texts. Both Feuchtwanger's Judaism and his early, fierce criticism of the Nazi Party ensured that he would be a target of systematic state-sponsored persecution immediately after Hitler's appointment as chancellor in January 1933. On the same day that Hitler was appointed leader of the German government by President Paul von Hindenburg, Feuchtwanger was on a speaking tour in the United States: On 30 January 1933 he was invited to a festive dinner in Washington D.C., hosted by the then German ambassador to the US, Friedrich Wilhelm von Prittwitz und Gaffron. The next day, Prittwitz resigned from his duties as German diplomat – and he recommended that Feuchtwanger stay away from Germany for good. This is what Feuchtwanger did; he did not return to Berlin.

At home, in Germany, his works and published plays were included among those books thrown into the flames of the Nazi book burning held across Germany on 10 May 1933. Feuchtwanger could have stayed in Washington, but in 1933, he was not yet willing to settle in America – he was not prepared to leave Europe behind. He did not return to Germany, of course, but moved to Southern France, settling in Sanary-sur-Mer. There, he continued to fight the fascist and racist ideology of the Third Reich. In 1936, still in Sanary-sur-Mer, he wrote the historic novel *Der falsche Nero* (*The Pretender*), in which he compared the Roman Terentius Maximus, who had pretended to be Nero, with the Austrian upstart Hitler.

Deeply concerned about the lack of any forthright anti-Nazi attitude among the Western powers Britain and the USA, he became curious about Soviet commu-

30 "keine eindeutige Darstellung der anglo-indischen Politik im 18. Jahrhundert," Feuchtwanger, Vorwort zu den "Drei Stücken", 664.

31 "Erwarten Sie, bitte, von diesen Stücken keine historische […] Belehrung," Feuchtwanger, Vorwort zu den "Drei Stücken," 664.

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nism. From November 1936 to February 1937, he traveled the Soviet Union. In his travel impressions of Moscow in 1937, he had many good things to say about life under Stalin. Later, these notes from Russia were severely criticized by his friends as incredibly naïve, but Feuchtwanger was certainly right in assuming that Hitler could only be defeated if the United States, Britain, *and* the Soviet Union would become allies and join forces against Nazi Germany. This is what happened only a few years later, when the American president Franklin D. Roosevelt, the British prime minister Winston Churchill, and the Soviet leader Joseph Stalin formed an alliance against Hitler.

When France declared war on Germany in 1939, Feuchtwanger moved to Nîmes because of the surprisingly fast advance of German troops. From there, he escaped to Marseille in a most fanciful disguise: The playwright Feuchtwanger, in a life-threatening, crucial moment of his existence – played the role of a woman. He acted on a stage called real life; and he succeeded as an actor when playing the role of his life. From Marseille, he was able to flee with his wife Marta to the United States via Spain and Portugal. He escaped with the help of Varian Fry, a journalist and member of the American Emergency Rescue Committee.[32] The Feuchtwangers decided to finally leave the Old World behind – and they sailed from Lisbon on board the ship "Excalibur" without further delay to New York City, where they were greeted, on 5 October 1940, by the Statue of Liberty. The time of Feuchtwanger's asylum in the United States of America had begun.[33]

As soon as Feuchtwanger had been officially granted political asylum in the United States, he left New York for California and settled in the vicinity of Los Angeles in 1941, when he published a memoir of his internment, *Der Teufel in Frankreich* (*The Devil in France*). In 1943, Feuchtwanger bought the Villa Aurora in Pacific Palisades, California. Here one might ask how it came to be that the refugee Feuchtwanger was in a position to buy and finance a wonderful and expensive Spanish-style house? The simple and straightforward answer is that by then, Feuchtwanger was very well-known throughout the United States. Many of his writings had been translated and become bestsellers in the New World.

In the mid-1940s, his most popular novel in the United States was *Jud Süß* (*Jew Suss*), originally published in Germany in 1925. It was based on a play he had written as early as 1916. The novel is set in the eighteenth century and tells the story of the Jewish businessman Joseph Süß Oppenheimer, who is accused of lecherous relations with the ladies of the court of Duke Karl Alexander of Württemberg. Yet, not only is he found innocent, but he also discovers that he is the illegitimate son of a Christian nobleman. When sentenced to death, he does not

32 See Sternburg, *Feuchtwanger*, 416.

33 See Sternburg, *Feuchtwanger*, 423.

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reveal his Christian origins. Instead, he decides to hold fast to Judaism. When dying, he recites the *Sh'ma Yisrael*, the most important prayer in Judaism.
Feuchtwanger's moving novel was extremely well-received by readers in Europe and America. Within the first year of its appearance, it went through five printings. By 1931, it had been translated into 17 languages. This tremendous success established Feuchtwanger as a major international author and it allowed him to live a life of financial independence. In Germany, the NSDAP filmed their own anti-Semitic version of the story with the very same title of Feuchtwanger's novel. The Nazi film industry's version of *Jud Süß*, directed by Veit Harlan, was released in 1940. The anti-Semitic film portrays Oppenheimer in an entirely different light than the original. The Nazis perverted the intention of Feuchtwanger's book.
In his American exile, Feuchtwanger made Pacific Palisades, California, his new home because this was the place where many of the famous exiled German writers and artists had already settled. Thomas Mann, Heinrich Mann, Theodor W. Adorno, Alfred Döblin, Franz Werfel, Arnold Schönberg, and Fritz Lang, to name just a few, and, of course, Feuchtwanger's old and close friend Bertolt Brecht all lived in or around Los Angeles. The intellectual elite of the Weimar Republic now lived together as if they were in a small village. Pacific Palisades in particular became a unique place in the history of German-American relations, an almost mythical place. It became what has been aptly called a "New Weimar," or, a true "Weimar on the Pacific."[34]

Writing Against the Nazis and their Ideology – Feuchtwanger's Play "Waffen für Amerika" (1943/1944)

Immediately after he had bought the Villa Aurora, Feuchtwanger wanted to express his gratitude to America as a safe haven, a sanctuary where he had eventually found rest and political asylum. In December 1943,[35] the grateful Feuchtwanger began to write a play about one of the greatest characters of American history, Benjamin Franklin[36], *founding father* of the American republic and architect of

34 See Erhard Bahr. *Weimar on the Pacific. German Exile Culture in Los Angeles and The Crisis of Modernism* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2007). For more on the German exiles in California, see Anthony Heilbut. *Exiled in Paradise. German Refugee Artists and Intellectuals in America from the 1930s to the Present* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997).

35 See Hans Dahlke. "Nachbemerkung: Waffen für Amerika," in *Lion Feuchtwanger: Dramen II*, ed. by Hans Dahlke (Berlin: Aufbau, 1984), 774.

36 Today the best biographies on Benjamin Franklin are: H. W. Brands. *The First American: The Life and Times of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Anchor Books, 2000); and Walter Isaacson. *Benjamin Franklin. An American Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003). For a recent biography

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the Franco-American military alliance of 1778 – an alliance that helped the Americans gain and protect their freedom against their British oppressors in the War of Independence (1775-1783). Franklin, who had thus successfully established a viable democracy, was a former scientist. In the late 1740s, he had ingeniously invented the lightning rod and other remarkable designs like the Franklin stove or the Glass Harmonica. In all respects, he seemed a wise, witty and, at times, even cunning man who was the very embodiment of progress. Because Franklin had forged the Franco-American military alliance during his prolonged stay (between 1776 and 1785) as American ambassador at Versailles and in Paris, Feuchtwanger called his play *Waffen für Amerika* (*Arms for America*).

In an explanatory note from 1954, Feuchtwanger later pointed out that his own personal experience of exile in France and America had made it quite clear to him that a deep historical bond existed between Europe and North America. Living in America also allowed Feuchtwanger to come to grips with the quintessential *American* character of Franklin – a man whom he had only been able to study, analyze, and understand from a *European* perspective before he had moved to and settled in the United States.[37] A theater play on the famous eighteenth-century character Franklin allowed him to analyze both historical and contemporary events on the two continents.

By carrying out his analytical comparison, Feuchtwanger implies certain parallels: He sees certain historical processes at work and he sees a wide range of characters and political opinions contributing to American success. It must be noted that by this time, in the mid-1940s – other than in the 1920s – Feuchtwanger had become genuinely interested in the continuing process of history. He was interested in an understanding of history that was still part of the present. Accordingly, he did not simply want to mirror contemporary events in episodes of the past. By composing his play *Waffen für Amerika,* Feuchtwanger wanted to teach a historical lesson, a lesson about the course of history.

Feuchtwanger conceded that the dramatic key events of 1933, 1939, and 1941 – the National Socialists' rise to power, the outbreak of World War II and the forging of a military alliance of Britain, the USA, and the Soviet Union against Hitler – had not only changed his view of the world, but also his understanding of the role and function of the theater. "The message of my latest plays," he confessed, "differs from the philosophy of my earlier pieces."[38] Benjamin Franklin,

in German see Jürgen Overhoff. *Benjamin Franklin. Erfinder, Freigeist, Staatenlenker* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2006). Feuchtwanger was informed about Franklin's life by the best Franklin biography of his time: Carl van Doren. *Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Viking Press, 1938).

37 See Lion Feuchtwanger. "Zu meinem Roman 'Waffen für Amerika (1954)'," in Lion Feuchtwanger, *Ein Buch nur für meine Freunde* (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1984), 394-402.

38 "Nun haben natürlich die wüsten und großartigen Geschehnisse der [vergangenen Jahre] mein Weltbild verändert, und die Botschaft der späteren Stücke entstammt einer anderen Philosophie

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Feuchtwanger held, had been engaged in a fight for a particular kind of political progress. It was the same historical progress that America under President Franklin D. Roosevelt tried to secure in the epic military battle against Hitler.
Feuchtwanger compared history with a flowing river ("the process of history is a kind of flow"),[39] and America had been wise enough to always set her sails in the right direction, moving smartly and swiftly on the river of progress. The Nazis, on the other hand, had been foolishly trying to stem their country against progress, freedom, democracy, social justice, and religious toleration. Thus, they were to be swept away, rather sooner than later, by the Americans in a crushing defeat. Feuchtwanger never doubted that America and her allies would gain victory in the form of a full and comprehensive defeat of the Nazis.
The values of true progress, freedom, democracy, social justice, and religious tolerance would prove to be stronger than the racist doctrines of the fascists. The values of true progress were core American values – and if one wanted to understand these American values, one had to understand the most worthy and dignified of all Americans, Benjamin Franklin. If one understood Benjamin Franklin, grasping the wise and smart way he thought and acted, one would understand progress. One could then finally act in full accordance with it. Feuchtwanger therefore wanted to have Franklin acting on the stage in a way so the audience – following the American statesman's thoughts and actions closely – could and indeed would learn an important historical lesson, a lesson about the mechanism of historical progress itself.
Feuchtwanger was certain that the dynamics of historical progress never came to a halt – whether in 1776, in 1783 or in 1943. If progress was to be depicted as the real hero[40] of his theatrical production, then the historical lesson of his play would be that progress could only be achieved by strong and powerful political coalitions – sometimes coalitions of antagonist forces like the Americans and the Soviets, with the help of the French and the British. In *Waffen für Amerika*, Feuchtwanger developed a concept of human progress achieved through a European-American co-operation that was only to be understood with regard to similar coalitions in earlier phases of transatlantic history. The concept of a European-American co-operation was one that he felt would survive, despite all the chauvinists on both sides of the Atlantic.
How did Feuchtwanger set out in late 1943 and early 1944 to teach his historical lesson on stage with the greatest possible effect? Feuchtwanger portrayed Franklin

als die der früheren," Feuchtwanger, Vorwort zu den "Drei Stücken", 669.

39 "Geschichte [ist] etwas Fließendes," Feuchtwanger, Vorwort zu den "Drei Stücken", 669.

40 Lion Feuchtwanger. "Nachwort des Autors von 1952," in Lion Feuchtwanger, *Die Füchse im Weinberg* (Berlin: Aufbau, 2008), 981: "Der Held [ist] nicht Benjamin Franklin […], sondern jener unsichtbare Lenker der Geschichte […]: der Fortschritt" [The hero [is] not Benjamin Franklin […], but that invisible driving force of history […]: progress]."

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as a person who acted reasonably – always –, who acted honestly, and who combined a polite conduct with cunning persistency and stamina. Franklin always knew precisely what his political goals were and he never lost sight of them. He never lost faith in progress. This becomes particularly obvious in Act 1, Scene 3, when Franklin meets with Queen Marie-Antoinette and the ladies and gentlemen of the French High Aristocracy. They ask him how he felt when he sailed from America to France, always knowing that, once captured by the British Fleet, he would have faced the gallows as a traitor: "How could you possibly endure on board the ship? Did you not die for fear? Did you not see the gallows before your eyes all the time?"[41] But Ben Franklin coolly replies: "On board the ship I was occupied with my studies, I studied the Gulf stream, the swift and warm Atlantic ocean current."[42]

Then a High Officer at the French Court remembers how calm Franklin actually was when he received depressing information about the imminent defeat of the Continental Army in early 1777. The American ambassador to France simply continued to lecture at the French Academy about electricity, lightning and great storms:

> In early summer, we received news about the thirteen American Colonies, learning that they were as good as defeated. At that time, Doctor Franklin lectured at the Academy about meteorology. The tranquility with which he talked was just admirable. And his humour – under these circumstances.[43]

Franklin then explains his creed: "I believe in my cause. Even in the darkest hour, I said to myself: It will work out in the end."[44] The French Queen Marie-Antoinette is deeply moved and impressed by Franklin's firm belief in the inevitable power of progress: "This sounds like a prayer in church."[45] Franklin smiles at her, and he continues to openly propagate what he thinks is indeed "pleasing to God."[46] Then he recites the Preamble of the American Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are

41 "Wie haben Sie das nur ausgehalten auf dem Schiff? Sind Sie nicht gestorben vor Angst? Haben Sie nicht immerzu den Galgen vor Augen gehabt?", Feuchtwanger, *Waffen für Amerika*, 425.

42 "Ich habe mich mit Studien befaßt, zum Beispiel über den Golfstrom," Feuchtwanger, *Waffen für Amerika*, 425.

43 "Im Frühsommer traf hier die Nachricht ein, daß die dreizehn amerikanischen Kolonien so gut wie besiegt seien. Um diese Zeit hielt Doktor Franklin in der Akademie seine große Rede über die Wetterkunde. Es war bewundernswert, mit welcher Ruhe Sie sprachen, und mit wieviel Humor […] Unter solchen Umständen," Feuchtwanger, *Waffen für Amerika*, 427

44 "Ich glaube an meine Sache. Wenn es noch so schwarz aussah, ich sagte mir: und es geht doch," Feuchtwanger, *Waffen für Amerika*, 428.

45 "Das klingt ja wie in der Kirche," Feuchtwanger, *Waffen für Amerika*, 428.

46 "Gott wohlgefälli[g]," Feuchtwanger, *Waffen für Amerika*, 429.

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endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."[47]

Fig. 1: Still from the German ZDF TV-Adaptation *Waffen für Amerika,* starring Arno Assmann as Benjamin Franklin, directed by Heinz Schirk (1976).

Feuchtwanger thus wants to let the audience feel Franklin's firm belief in republicanism, liberalism, and democracy. He wants to let them feel the truthfulness of his principles and the inevitability of progress. He wants to make them see the stupidity and futility of acting against what seems to be the preordained course of history. He pushes his audience to shy away from acting against freedom, against the democratic constitution, or against equality. Any actor who performs the role of Franklin on stage has to convey a sense of the utmost certainty that the "good guys" will win even the fiercest battle in the darkest hour of mankind. For the audience of his day and age, Feuchtwanger had this simple but earnest message: Roosevelt will defeat Hitler, there is not a shadow of doubt about this.
Fortunately, history was to prove Feuchtwanger right. The United States of America – founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1776 and wisely led by President Franklin D. Roosevelt from 1933 to 1945 – won the decisive battles against Nazi Germany

47 "Wir halten dafür, daß die nachfolgenden Wahrheiten keines weiteren Beweises bedürfen: Alle Menschen sind gleich geschaffen. Sie sind von ihrem Schöpfer ausgestattet mit gewissen unveräußerlichen Rechten, als da sind Leben, Freiheit und Streben nach Glück," Feuchtwanger, *Waffen für Amerika*, 429.

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in Western Europe. Soon after this epic victory, defeated Germany was divided into four occupied zones and then in two parts, East and West: The Federal Republic of Germany was established in 1949 with the support of the Americans, while the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was founded in the same year under the protection of the Soviet Union. In Germany, Feuchtwanger's *Waffen für Amerika* was first performed seventeen years after the end of the Second World War – in the GDR: Under the direction of Wolfgang Wischnewski, the play was put on stage in Zwickau in Saxony. From October 1962 to the summer of 1963, it was performed in the Stadttheater Zwickau over 20 times and it was apparently well. received by the audience.[48]

In West Germany, *Waffen für Amerika* was first seen on TV in the following decade. The public-service channel ZDF broadcasted an adaptation directed by Heinz Schirk on 29 June 1976, just one week before 4 July 1976 – precisely 200 years after the founding of the United States by Franklin and the other signers of the Declaration of Independence. The ZDF version of Feuchtwanger's play, with a strong cast[49], was aired again on German TV in 2010. The director Schirk was particularly keen on lending Feuchtwanger's eighteenth-century story the authentic flair of pre-revolutionary France. He decided to insert a number of musical interludes in Feuchtwanger's play, with one of the actors singing diatribes against Queen Marie-Antoinette and her haughty manners.[50] Still today, Schirk's congenial version of Feuchtwanger's *Waffen für Amerika* has a strong effect on the viewer.

When he completed his play *Waffen für Amerika* in April 1944,[51] Feuchtwanger clearly and explicitly had the intention to teach a historical lesson – and he wanted to thank America. Unfortunately, America was not grateful to Feuchtwanger in the same way. During the McCarthy era, Feuchtwanger became the target of suspicion as a socialist or even communist intellectual. This was the time when US Senator Joseph McCarthy (Republican, Wisconsin) effectively spread fear of Communist influence. It was a period characterized by severe political repression. McCarthyism began in 1947 and lasted until 1956. As early as 1947, Feuchtwanger wrote a play about the Salem Witch Trials, *Wahn oder der Teufel in Boston* (*Delusion, or The Devil in Boston*), again a historical drama, set in seventeenth century Massachusetts. Thus, Feuchtwanger anticipated the theme of Arthur Miller's 1953 play *The Crucible*.

48 Dahlke, "Nachbemerkung: Waffen für Amerika," 782

49 Queen Marie-Antoinette: Christine Böhm; Minister Maurepas: Walter Rilla; Benjamin Franklin: Arno Assmann.

50 This was mentioned by Heinz Schirk in a telephone interview with the author of this article on 4 March 2019.

51 Dahlke, "Nachbemerkung: Waffen für Amerika," 774.

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At the end of his life, he dealt with Jewish themes again and advocated a Jewish state in Palestine, a state that came into being in 1948. Feuchtwanger never returned to Germany, either East or West, despite the fact that in 1953 he won the National Prize of the GDR First Class for Art and Literature – as a communist sympathizer, the GDR held him in high esteem until his death in late 1958. His wife Marta stayed in America, too. She continued to live in California in Villa Aurora and remained an important figure in the exile community, devoting the remainder of her life – she died in 1987 – to the work of her husband. She donated her husband's library, photographs, and personal papers and manuscripts to the Feuchtwanger Memorial Library, housed within the Doheny Memorial Library at the University of Southern California, Los Angeles (USC).

The Feuchtwanger special collection at USC is a living memory of German emigration to the United States in the 1930s – and it is a constant source for research on German-American educational history, a sub-discipline of transatlantic history, of which Feuchtwanger's play *Waffen für Amerika* will always remain an intriguing and important part. As Feuchtwanger predicted in one of his last public statements in November 1958: "Obviously, both the fate and the effect of my plays have not yet been fully accomplished."[52]. He was hoping that most of his plays, including *Waffen für Amerika*, would be understood much better "not in ten years' time, but in fifty years."[53] Less than four weeks before his death, Feuchtwanger dreamed of a much more empathic and understanding reception of his plays in the twenty first century: "I am looking forward to it."[54]

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52 "Abgeschlossen ist das Schicksal und die Wirkung der Stücke offenbar noch nicht," Lion Feuchtwanger. "Vorwort zu 'Stücke in Prosa'," in *Lion Feuchtwanger: Dramen II*, ed. by Hans Dahlke (Berlin: Aufbau, 1984), 671.

53 "nicht in zehn Jahren, […] sondern in fünfzig," Feuchtwanger, Vorwort zu "Stücke in Prosa", 671.

54 "Ich warte darauf," Feuchtwanger, Vorwort zu "Stücke in Prosa", 671.

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Simon Richter

Duell an der Havel: Fritz von Unruh's Depiction of Eighteenth-Century Prussian-American Relations

Fig. 2: Chancellor Merkel and President Trump at 2018 G7 Summit (© Jesco Denzel).

The photograph was an instant internet sensation (Fig. 2). Taken by Jesco Denzel, an official government photographer, during the G7 Summit of June 2018, and posted to Instagram by the German Chancellor's office, it perfectly captures the standoff between President Trump and the other leaders of the G7, foremost among them Chancellor Merkel.[1] Leaning in, with no more than a meter separating her from the American president, Merkel's scolding gaze calls him out for his puerile flaunting of diplomatic norms. By now it does not matter whether the topic at hand is the Paris Climate Agreement, trade treaties and tariffs, refugees, NATO contributions – all of them suddenly major points of contention that threaten to undermine transatlantic relationships. What is fascinating about

1 Chloe Watson. "Trump G7 Photo Becomes Internet Classic, Going from Baroque to Ridiculous," *The Guardian*, 11 June 2018, URL: https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jun/11/g7-photo-of-trump-merkel-becomes-classic-art (accessed March 4, 2019).

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images such as these is the way they present political and philosophical conflicts between nations through the bodies of their leaders as impasses that may *or may not* be resolved. The future hangs in the balance.

That future is, of course, closely linked to a chain of antecedent diplomatic encounters. The central conflict is between Angela Merkel and Donald Trump, between the Federal Republic of Germany and the United States, for which there a long and intimate history. We also recognize the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and we see French President Emmanuel Macron's nose and Theresa May's earlobe. That this is a meeting of the G7 and not the G8 alerts us to the absence of Vladimir Putin – as did Trump's suggestion that Russia and Putin be invited back – an absence so vivid as to make him present. We realize that the picture resonates with the afterimages of other fraught occasions: Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin at Yalta, for example, or MacArthur and Hirohito in Tokyo. Part of the power of the G7 picture, I would argue, is its implicit reconfiguration of the post-1945 world order. There is more at stake here than the items on the agenda.

Obviously, these photographic representations of political negotiation are charged with a unique drama, often enhanced by the backstories. From the perspective of theater and film studies, the question to ask is whether the inherent drama of historical conflict and negotiation is available for representation on the stage? In centuries past, drama was a favored and powerful genre for exploring the intersection of public lives and political ideas. Think of Shakespeare's Roman and British history plays or Schiller's political tragedies. While the historical novel and historical drama continued to flourish in the nineteenth and peaked in the first half of the twentieth century, I would argue that for much of the postwar period, Western audiences' interest in the historical-political dimension of human life declined. We can offer several explanations for this turn away from history. Perhaps it was a cultural defense mechanism against the trauma of the Second World War. Perhaps it was a condition for our market- and consumption-driven cultures to succeed. Perhaps the historical paradigms for literary and dramatic production available after the war were found to be inadequate or suspect. Perhaps history was a burden and our feeling of freedom depended on casting it from our shoulders and tackling – or avoiding – the challenges of the present. People shook off the weight of historical precedent in their conviction that what they were creating was new and in order to proceed unhindered by a historical critique that might show that it was not.

It is against this background that I want to re-introduce a forgotten German playwright, Fritz von Unruh, and his 1954 play, *Duell an der Havel*, in which, more than 50 years before the publication of Jürgen Overhoff's dual biography, *Fried-*

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rich der Grosse und George Washington: Zwei Wege der Aufklärung,[2] Unruh not only asks the question: "Wer ist größer: Washington – oder unser Fridericus Borussorum Rex?", but, more audaciously, orchestrates their fictional meeting on the stage of the *Staatstheater* in Wiesbaden, where the play premiered.[3] It is not our task to compare Washington or Frederick's relative grandeur, but we will focus on the postwar historical moment of the play's production in order to determine to what end Unruh dusted off Washington and Frederick and what can be learned from it.
Fritz von Unruh was born into a family of Prussian nobility and was the son of a decorated Prussian general. As a boy, he was sent to the military academy at Plön in Holstein. At the academy, he was selected to be one of a handful of companions to the Kaiser's two youngest sons. In this rarified academic context, he absorbed exorbitant portions of Prussian culture, history, and myth. In four autobiographical novels written after the war, Unruh tried, through the exorcism of writing, to overcome the insidiousness of his *Bildung*, but wound up constructing the nightmare vision of a bizarre universe that we might best compare to a Prussian Hogwarts. Pedagogical cruelty, homo-erotically charged sadism, distorted protestant Christianity, escapist fantasies, suicide, strict submission to hierarchy – these were the elements of his milieu. Drawn to music, the arts, and theater – not unlike the young Frederick the Great – Unruh's inclinations met with stern rebuke. He entered World War I as an officer and was traumatized, particularly by his experience at Verdun. He embraced pacifism – notably not one of the Prussian virtues – and authored numerous anti-war plays that issued from the scene of his trauma, many of which were censored by the Prussian state. During the Weimar Republic, the raw emotion and grotesque allegorical character of these plays drew the attention of the great German-Jewish director Max Reinhardt and, for a time, at least until 1933, Unruh became the most widely celebrated Expressionist playwright. Some of his plays grappled with Prussian history, essentially putting an intimately observed Prussian pathology on display. He stood by his convictions and challenged the Nazis in the years leading up to 1933 at public rallies, where he exhorted thousands of youthful auditors to stand with him. His books were burned and he went into exile, eventually winding up in and around New York.
Exile was not easy for him. In contrast to Lion Feuchtwanger and Franz Werfel, to mention two more successful exile authors, Unruh's literary habitus did not translate well into an American idiom or into the prevailing literary discourse. Things did not get easier once the war was over. In the spirit of making reparations to a native son, the city of Frankfurt am Main repeatedly invited him to return

2 Jürgen Overhoff. *Friedrich der Große und George Washington: Zwei Wege der Aufklärung* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2011).

3 Fritz von Unruh. "Duell an der Havel," in *Sämtliche Werke* (20 vols.), ed. by Hanns Martin Elster and Bodo Rollke, Vol. 5 (Berlin: Haude und Spenersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1991). 376. – Subsequent references to the play will be indicated by page number in parentheses.

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and three times he tried. A series of rousing speeches to the youth of the nation in 1948 seemed to bode well for a comeback, but his ability to reach an audience was limited and his pathos failed to animate the language of his plays. Three historical plays from the early 1950s, including *Duell an der Havel*, enjoyed every advantage in terms of director, cast, and venue, but failed to resonate with audiences. It wasn't just the language. Unruh's critical animus was re-directed toward what he perceived to be a continuity between Prussian history, the Nazi regime, and the new Republic. When Adenauer started moving towards a remilitarization of Germany, Unruh was incensed. His message was not welcome. West Germany had no patience for a Prussian pacifist.

In order to appreciate Unruh's political interventions through theater, it is important to call to mind what a looming presence Prussia was not only for him, but for all of Germany and the Allies. From our perspective, we are likely to confine our notion of Prussia to the remnants and reanimations of Prussian history in Berlin and Potsdam – whether the dutifully curated palaces, museums and gardens of the *Stiftung Preußischer Schlösser und Gärten* or the ludicrous reconstruction of the Berliner Schloss. It is often forgotten that at the time of Frederick the Great, much of Western Germany was in Prussian hands, and that by 1866 the Kingdom of Prussia stretched from the Dutch border to Königsberg. Throughout the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries, Prussia became known for a set of strict values or virtues that included loyalty, order, diligence, duty, discipline, and the like. For many, the *Urszene* of Prussian culture, however, was the unspeakably cruel and traumatic punishment the Soldier King imposed on his wayward son, Frederick the Great: forcing him to watch the execution of his dearest friend Katte from a prison window in Küstrin. For the Allied forces administering the occupied sectors, especially for the Americans and British, the Prussian mentality lay at the root of Nazi evil and needed to be eradicated. The allies dismantled the *Siegesallee* in Berlin, a sculptural glorification of Prussian history that extended from the Brandenburg Gate to the *Siegessäule* and removed the equestrian statue of Frederick the Great from Unter den Linden. But that was not enough. On 25 February 1947, the Allies summarily abolished Prussia with Control Council Law 46. "The Prussian State which from early days has been a bearer of militarism and reaction in Germany has de facto ceased to exist. Guided by the interests of preservation of peace and security of peoples and with the desire to assure further reconstruction of the political life of Germany on a democratic basis," all political, territorial, and administrative traces of Prussia will be eliminated.[4] We have to keep this in mind as we approach Fritz von Unruh's play, the premiere and only staging of which took place in Wiesbaden, in the American occupied sector, in March and April

4 "Abolition of the State of Prussia, Control Council Law No. 46," URL: https://www.questia.com/read/16323703/germany-1947-1949-the-story-in-documents (accessed March 4, 2019).

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of 1954. Part of Unruh's intervention, in other words, was to stage an encounter between Frederick the Great, the most familiar icon of Prussia and paradigmatic figure of enlightened despotism, and George Washington, the democratic titan of the United States, at a time when the stock of the former was at an all-time low.
Appropriately, the historical premise of the play, as well as the framework for the plot, is a trade treaty – *ein Handelsabkommen* – between Prussia and the fledgling nation. As Jürgen Overhoff explains, there really was a "Treaty of Amity and Commerce" that was hammered out in The Hague in 1785 between Frederick's representative Friedrich Wilhelm von Thulemeyer and a trio of well-known American representatives to Europe, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and Benjamin Franklin.[5] Preliminary negotiations were conducted in Berlin by American representatives travelling incognito as merchants. For Unruh, an adept in Prussian arcana, and himself a conflicted mediator between the United States and the young Federal Republic, the Treaty and the idea of representatives in disguise were tantalizing enough to suggest a story that turns on George Washington traveling in obvious incognito to Berlin, quite possibly to work out the terms of a new cultural "treaty" on the Wiesbadener stage between citizens of the Federal Republic and the occupying force.
Instead of scenes, the play is comprised of six tableaux, what Unruh calls *Bilder* – essentially scenes of action that lead to tableaux similar to the photograph of Merkel and Trump. In the first tableau, which takes place in the Potsdam Palace, Frederick's aide de campe, Major Ingo von Schmettau, is preparing a report on Washington for his sovereign, due by 4AM that morning. His conversation with other officers is interrupted by the news that two Americans have been arrested for unauthorized coffee-roasting, followed by their appearance on stage: a Mr. James Colder, head of the delegation, who bears an uncanny and much remarked upon resemblance to George Washington, and Ms. Evelyne Smith, his economic advisor, who seems on an earlier occasion to have aroused Schmettau's interest. Coffee, Europe's new and fashionable commodity, is heavily taxed in Brandenburg-Prussia in order to finance Frederick's military, which, as we know from Immanuel Kant, is viewed as a necessary guarantee for the freedom of enlightened discourse – "Argue as much as you like and about what you like, but obey!"[6] For Americans, the idea of taxing coffee is as repugnant as taxing tea and as likely to produce a response akin to the Boston Tea Party. The situation, which should have found an easy diplomatic solution, escalates when, in the heat of ideological sparring between Evelyne and Schmettau, the latter insults the former – "We could care

5 Jürgen Overhoff. *Friedrich der Große und George Washington. Zwei Wege der Aufklärung* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 2011), 310-312.

6 "*Räsoniert, soviel ihr wollt und worüber ihr wollt, aber gehorcht!*" Immanuel Kant. "Beantwortung der Frage: Was ist Aufklärung?", in *Berlinische Monatsschrift* (1784), 481-494, URL: http://www.deutschestextarchiv.de/book/view/kant_aufklaerung_1784?p=17 (accessed March 4, 2019).

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less about your fraudulent claims of freedom over there!"[7] (401). Evelyne heatedly responds by challenging him to a duel with pistols, which he accepts.

In the second tableau, an insomniac Frederick summons Schmettau to his private palace, Schloss Sanssouci, even earlier than the 4AM deadline for his report. We learn that Frederick admires Washington and sees the Revolution as "the beginning of a new, more realistic world order"[8] (408). Schmettau offers a scathing critique of the United States ("The pursuit of material goods is the only and loftiest principle of Americans,"[9] 413) and of Washington, who as "Freedom's hero" owns 300 African slaves, and, according to Schmettau, believes only in America, not in freedom – an early version of "America first." Frederick suspects that Schmettau, who reminds him uncannily of his youthful friend Katte, may have ulterior motives for painting such a dismal picture of the young republic. Schmettau confesses his part in the impending duel and Frederick presses him to reveal if he has by chance fallen in love with Evelyne. Schmettau swears on his Prussian oath that he has not. We, as audience, of course, know better.

The short third tableau takes place in a hotel room, where Colder and Evelyne engage in an intense dialogue that exposes the implications of the duel for the trade treaty. Colder/Washington admires Frederick, values the trade treaty for the good of the republic, and wants Evelyne therefore to back out of the duel, which involves a personal slight, as would only be reasonable. Evelyne is passionate about proceeding with the duel and regards Frederick as an arbitrary dictator with whom negotiation is morally offensive. In her view, her freedom and with it the freedom of the United States are at stake. Colder must not really be the disguised Washington if he insists, just as she would cease to be Evelyne and an American if she were to renege on the challenge. Obviously, Unruh is working out the terms of a philosophical dilemma regarding the paradoxes of freedom. But, as Washington points out, the motivating factor in Evelyne's argument is not reason, but passion of a distinctly unreasonable variety. Just as Schmettau's companions and Frederick suspect that he has fallen for Evelyne, so Washington detects the same for her. She responds that she doesn't merely want to wound Schmettau, she wants to kill him: "I want to shoot him!"[10] To which Washington responds: "What? Hahaha! (*all of a sudden*) kill the one you love?"[11] (426). This puzzling observation actually helps us understand what Unruh is doing. By deploying the topos of the radical proximity of love and hate, Unruh associates Evelyne, whom he also mysteriously calls an "Indian," with the character of Penthesilea in Prussian author Heinrich von Kleist's tragedy by the same name. Penthesilea is queen of the Amazons and she

7 "Wir pfeifen – und zwar auf Euren ganzen Freiheitsschwindel da drüben!"
8 "Der Anfangspunkt einer neuen, realeren Weltordnung"
9 "Das materielle Streben ist der einzige und höchste Grundsatz aller dort lebenden Menschen."
10 "Erschießen will ich ihn!"
11 "What? Hahaha! (*auf einmal*) *den* töten, den man liebt?"

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has fixed her amorous and destructive attention on Achilles whom she confronts in a succession of armed encounters, essentially duels, placing the future of the Amazon nation at risk for the sake of her passion. In their final confrontation, she and her dogs overwhelm Achilles, and she sinks her teeth into his breast: "Kisses, bites, they rhyme."[12] Eighteenth-century decorum wouldn't allow for this kind of excess, but the destructive and contradictory character of Evelyne's passion is implied. Frederick will later call her an "Amazönchen" (466). Washington, who had earlier tossed her pistol into the commode, urges her to be reasonable – "I cannot order you to do so. And I don't want to order you to do anything. Think of our goal. Don't do it"[13] (433-434) – and leaves. She retrieves the pistol.

The fourth tableau takes place on the Pfaueninsel, an island in the Havel River, and stages the duel in a manner that transposes the overwrought tragic quality of the corresponding scene in Kleist's *Penthesilea* into a comic mode. Schmettau's friends have loaded the dueling pistols with *Knallerbsen* (caps). Like Achilles in his final encounter with Penthesilea, Schmettau arrives determined not to duel, but Evelyne mocks his cowardice and submission to Frederick's command. Unruh opts for what he probably held to be a Kleistian version of gender comedy that we are now more likely to find inappropriate and offensive: "Schmettau leaps towards her, pulls her from the table, lays her over his knee and smacks her bottom with the flat of his hand. Suddenly he grabs her and wants to pull her towards him. Evelyne wrestles free. Runs back the length of the table and … shoots"[14] (443). Schmettau is wounded and bleeds. Both enter states of attenuated consciousness – similar to the state of Penthesilea and Achilles – until Evelyne blurts out, "I love you!"[15] (444). End of tableau.

For the fifth tableau, we return to the Potsdamer Stadtschloss. Can the trade treaty be saved? Can the relationships between Evelyne and Schmettau, Washington and Frederick, the United States and Prussia be mediated? As far as Unruh is concerned, only after all of the contradictions and tensions have been exposed. In effect, the duel on the Pfaueninsel is followed by a duel of words in the form of a trial that takes place between Frederick and Washington with Evelyne as his second. Framed as a court proceeding with judges at hand, Frederick presses his case against the American delegation for illegal coffee roasting. The prosecution and defense touch on principles of Prussian vs. American law, a discussion that

12 "Küsse, Bisse, das reimt sich," Heinrich von Kleist. "Penthesilea," in *Sämtliche Werke und Briefe* (2 vols.), ed. by Helmut Sembdner, Vol. 1 (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1997), 425.

13 "Ich kann es Ihnen nicht befehlen. Und ich will Ihnen auch nichts befehlen. Denken Sie an das Ziel. Tun Sie es nicht."

14 "Da stürzt Schmettau zu ihr hin, reißt sie vom Tisch, legt sie sich übers Knie und klatscht mit der flachen Hand auf ihr Gesäß. Plötzlich packt er sie und will sie an sich reißen. Da zerrt sich Evelyne frei. Rennt dann die Länge des Tisches zurück und . . . schießt."

15 "Ich liebe dich!"

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resolves into a debate over natural right and loyalty to the crown. They locate a common basis in Germanic law – *das alte germanische Sachsenrecht* (459) – but Frederick is outraged by the idea that rights reserved to him should be universalized to the citizenry. He accuses Washington of breaking his oath to the crown of England, arguing that oath-breaking was the founding act of the new state. In a sort of eighteenth-century version of WikiLeaks, Washington responds by airing secret intelligence about Frederick's largesse to Prussian nobility at the cost of the over-taxed poor. They arrive at an impasse and Washington is ready – in anticipation of Trump's *Art of the Deal*[16] – to walk away.

Unruh saves the situation by preempting Washington's departure by announcing that Schmettau, who has been under arrest in Spandau, has been brought to the Potsdam Palace. The dilemma is thus shifted to the Schmettau-Evelyne plot, which would seem even less tractable. Schmettau and Evelyne confront each other in the presence of Washington and Frederick. Will he remain loyal to Frederick and renounce his affection for Evelyne or will he break the oath, which he had reconfirmed in the second tableau, and renounce his loyalty to Prussia and his king? Frederick is confident: "He will not break his oath to me – not like your Washington broke his oath to the British king"[17] (465). Evelyne attempts to seduce him with anachronistic visions of the "undiscovered" American West (the redwoods, the sparkling waters of Washington state) – she is herself an anachronism, a female economist among the founding fathers of America, and, as such, a figure of fantasy as much as the appealing image of the America that she evokes. Schmettau counters with visions of his beloved Prussia. And yet Evelyne succeeds. Schmettau espouses Evelyne's motto for the new world: "The highest good is life"[18] (474) and thus commits that most un-Prussian of deeds, he breaks his oath.

For the sixth and final tableau, Unruh once again calls on Kleist, but this time it is *Prinz Friedrich von Homburg*, arguably the most brilliant literary representation of the Prussian ethos. Kleist's play is centered on Brandenburg's victory over Swedish forces at Fehrbellin and an uncompromising vision of loyalty that requires the battle's hero to acknowledge that the victory he secured depended on his failure to follow orders and that regardless of the victory and his heroism it is proper that he assent to his execution. Unruh's Frederick recalls his youth and the hatred he and his siblings shared for their ruthless father. "I, my sister, the family, relatives, people at large – we all hated him."[19] Referring to his father's cruel punishment, Frederick continues: "He crushed me because he wanted to replace my 'I want freedom' by awakening in me the 'Thou shalt' of duty. That 'Thou shalt' of duty

16 Donald Trump and Tony Schwartz. *The Art of the Deal* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2015).

17 "Das wird er *mir* nicht brechen – so wie euer Washington seinen Eid dem Britenkönig."

18 "Das Höchste ist das Leben."

19 "Ich, meine Schwester, die Familie, Verwandte, die Menschen – wir alle haßten ihn."

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should overshadow one's own self"[20] (482). For Unruh's Frederick, such self-denying behavior amounts to "Prussia's Declaration of Independence"[21] (482). "It was the Declaration of Independence from the desires of our own egos"[22] (480). Whether this *Urszene* of Prussian identity formation ultimately refers to Kleist's play or rather the cruel execution of his friend Katte by his father remains unclear. Frederick is in a state of historical hallucination. He willfully mistakes his chamberlain Grumbkow for the long dead Johann Sebastian Bach, composer of the Brandenburg Concertos, which he dedicated to the youngest son of the Grand Elector of Brandenburg. In the facial features of Schmettau, he now sees the executed Katte. He engages Schmettau in a humane dialogue of principles, suspending the Prussian hierarchical order. Frederick's fundamental commitment to a politics premised on war and a powerful military comes to light and becomes the foil for Schmettau's newly found pacifism. Unruh explicitly names the opposition: *Aberglaube Liebe* (love as superstition) confronts *Aberglaube Krieg* (war as superstition). Frederick ritually strips Schmettau of his Prussian military insignia and prepares to sign the trade treaty, which has, it seems, been saved. In a final exchange with Colder, Frederick subtly acknowledges his penetration of the incognito, at the same time that he wonders whether Washington, as Schmettau had earlier suggested, believes in freedom or only in America. Nationalism, in his view, is an even worse superstition than war. We can call this *Aberglaube Nationalismus* (nationalism as superstition). Washington responds that the worst superstition is that freedom can be restrained – we can call Washington's belief *Aberglaube Freiheit* (freedom as superstition). "The king stares at him. Suddenly he embraces him"[23] (494). Frederick leaves the stage in animated conversation with the imaginary Bach. The curtain falls.

Perhaps, like Kleist's *Der zerbrochene Krug*, the premiere of which under Goethe's direction failed miserably in Weimar, it is a question of timing and finding just the right way to approach Unruh's *Duell an der Havel*. Unruh's 1954 audience and critics were unforgiving. In a review in *Der Fortschritt* under the title "Prussia in a Perverse Light,"[24] the reviewer claimed that "Washington's" extensive lectures on freedom reminded him of the American re-educators, the "Umerzieher," of 1945.[25] The reviewer's suspicion that Unruh spent too much time in America and

20 "Er zertrat mich, weil er statt meines 'Ich will die Freiheit' in mir das 'Du sollst' der Pflicht erwecken wollte. Das 'Du sollst' der Pflicht weit hinaus über das eigene Ich!"

21 "Preußens Unabhängigkeitserklärung."

22 "Es war die Unabhängigkeitserklärung von den Begierden unseres eigenen Ich."

23 "König sieht ihn groß an. Plötzlich umarmt er ihn."

24 "Preußentum in schräger Sicht."

25 F.-H., "Preußentum in schräger Sicht. Abgerutschte Aufführung von Fritz von Unruhs 'Duell an der Havel' in Wiesbaden," *Der Fortschritt,* April 8, 1954. – "'Mister Colder'" alias Washington holds forth on the stage about freedom to the Prussian officers and the old rickety Fritz to such

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with Americans highlights the dilemma Unruh and others returning from exile faced. Unruh was not looking to re-educate his fellow Germans, but to win them for a reawakened Transatlantic partnership on equal terms. In the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, Martin Ruppert wondered about the rationale for returning to the eighteenth century. "If, with regards to Prussia, the beauty of the language of an author such as Heinrich von Kleist can't lure us into the past and its historical grandeur, then we should remain in the present."[26] E. R. Dallontano acknowledges the potential for drama, "but unfortunately, the drama never got off the ground since the poet Fritz von Unruh required Washington as well as Old Fritz with his podagra to mouth so much banal nonsense that they became caricatures of themselves."[27]

Could we imagine a performance of *Duell an der Havel* in the era of Trump? Such a performance would require recognition of Unruh's masterful integration of the conceptual framework – the political-philosophical differences and similarities between the idea of Prussia and the idea of the United States – with the plot of the play. The best way to show this is to use the "semiotic square," an analytic tool developed by A. J. Greimas.[28] The square begins with an opposition, in this case Colder/Washington vs. Frederick the Great as the representatives of two opposite versions of Enlightenment governance. Each of these implies a distinctive subject, Evelyne as the passionate instantiation of freedom and Schmettau as the passionate instantiation of duty. Washington and Evelyne are thus joint representatives of American freedom, while Frederick and Schmettau stand for Prussian duty. At

an extent that the 're-educators' of 1945 would have been in ecstasy. Fritz von Unruh probably spent so much time in America that he had no idea that a German-American love relationship on the stage was not the proper vehicle for giving a democracy for beginners course. Since he did it anyway, he spent scene after scene teetering along the narrow ridge between the sublime and the ridiculous." ['Mister Colder' alias Washington hält auf der Bühne preußischen Offizieren und dem alten, klapprigen Fritz ein solches Kolleg über die Freiheit, daß jeder 'Umerzieher' von 1945 seine Freude daran haben könnte. […] Fritz von Unruh war wahrscheinlich zu lange in Amerika, so daß er nicht ahnen konnte, daß eine deutsch-amerikanische Liebe auf der Bühne nicht gerade geeignet ist, einen Kursus für Anfänger in Demokratie zu halten. Da er es aber trotzdem tat, schlich er szenenlang auf dem schmalen Grat zwischen dem Erhabenen und Lächerlich dahin.]

26 Martin Ruppert. "Der alte Fritz und die Indianer. Unruhs 'Duell an der Havel' im Wiesbadener Staatstheater," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 29, 1954.

27 "Leider kam das Drama gar nicht erst zustande, denn Washington sowohl als auch der Alte Fritz mit seiner Podagra mußten ihrem Dichter Fritz von Unruh zo viel banales Papier nachschwätzen, daß sie zu Karikaturen ihrer Selbst wurden und das Drama verpaßten. Wenn wir nicht gerade – was Preußen anbetrifft – durch die Schönheit der Sprache eines Heinrich von Kleist in die Vergangenheit und ihre geschichtliche Größe abgelenkt werden, dann sollten wir in der Gegenwart bleiben." E. R. Dallontano, "Washington bekehrt den Alten Fritz," *Rheinisher Merkur,* April 2, 1954.

28 For a contemporary introduction to the semiotic square, see John J. Corso. "What Does Greimas's Semiotic Square Really Do?" *Mosaic: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 47 (2014): 69-89.

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the same time, we recognize that even though Evelyne and Schmettau are also opposites, they are similar in their passion, just as Washington and Frederick are similar in their rationality. A third form of relation that comes into view through the semiotic square is that of contradiction, in this case between Frederick and Evelyne (rational concept of duty vs. passionate concept of freedom), a theme widely explored by Unruh and complicated by gender, on the one hand, and Washington and Schmettau (rational concept of freedom vs. passionate concept of duty), on the other. The semiotic square also lets us see how the duel/love relationship and the trade treaty are homologous and alternative versions of precarious negotiation with potentially volatile outcomes (see Fig. 3). The shift from politics to passion as a way to finesse or circumvent the impasse is familiar from melodrama as well as comedy. Billy Wilder's brilliant postwar Berlin comedy *A Foreign Affair* (1948) comes to mind.

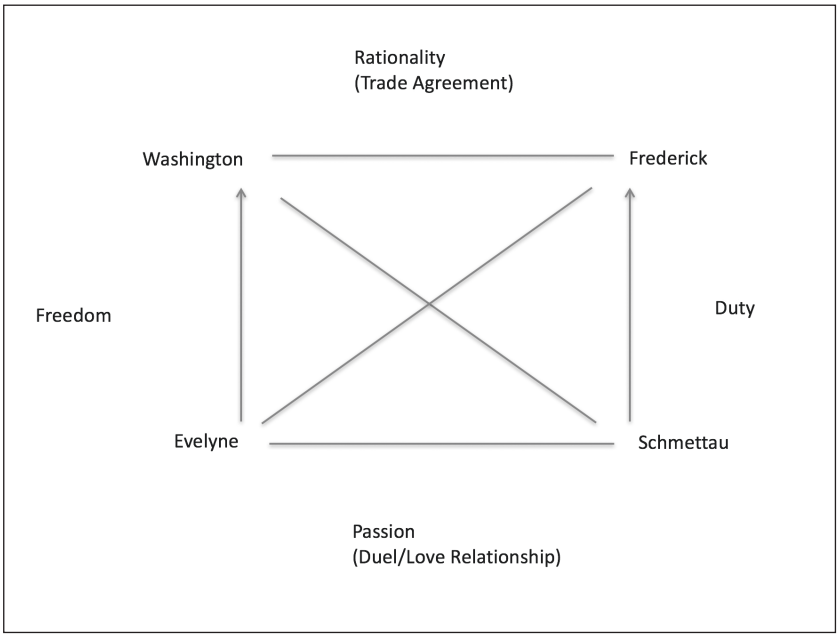

Fig. 3: Semiotic square, "Rationality, Passion, Duty, Freedom."

But we are still left wondering: what actually happened in the sixth tableau? What logic prevailed? How was the mediation, if it was a mediation, achieved? If we map the varieties of superstition Unruh introduced – *Aberglaube Krieg*, *Aberglaube Liebe*, *Aberglaube Nationalismus* or rather *Aberglaube Freiheit* – onto the semiotic square (see Fig. 4), perhaps we can find the answer. Because of Schmettau's be-

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trayal and abandonment of Prussia and his realignment with love, freedom, and pacifism in contradiction to war, the fourth corner is now unoccupied. Perhaps that is where Johann Sebastian Bach comes into the picture.

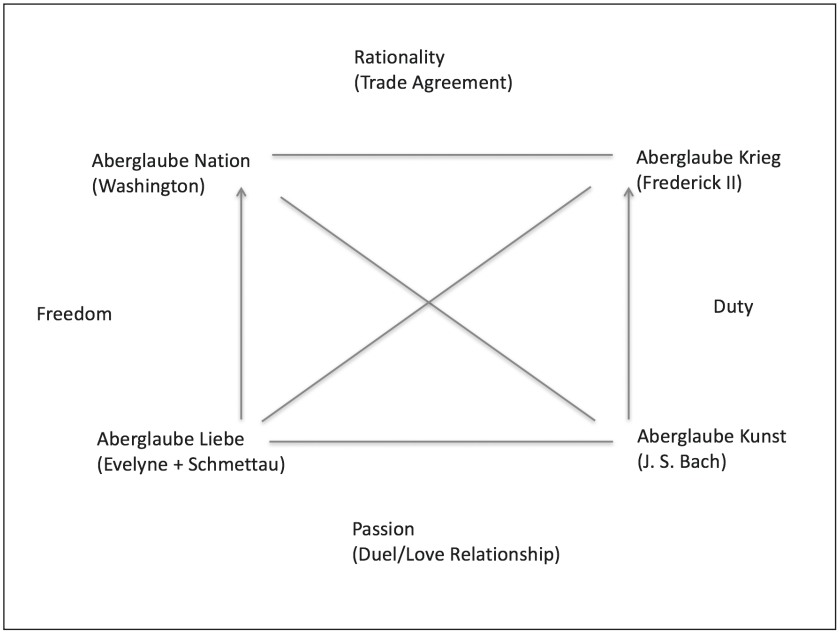

Fig. 4: Semiotic square, "Aberglaube."

Losing Schmettau, who reminded him of his young friend Katte, as well as the seven years he spent cultivating the arts as Crown Prince in Schloss Rheinsberg, Frederick replaces Schmettau with Bach, "der […] trotz seiner musikalischen Allmacht doch die Monarchie als die von Gott gewollte Ordnung [erkannte]" (479). An aesthetics of order, of sublimated passion and submission, – let us call it *Aberglaube Kunst* – would be the Prussian counterpart to the immigrant love story embodied by Evelyne and Schmettau, even if the historical availability of the former is called into question by its hallucinatory character, as is the latter by the anachronistic fantasy of Evelyne's existence. In a register that Unruh might not have understood, we could even imagine this position occupied by musical theorist Theodor Adorno who reasserted the critical potential of classical aesthetics in the face of American consumerism (see Fig. 5).

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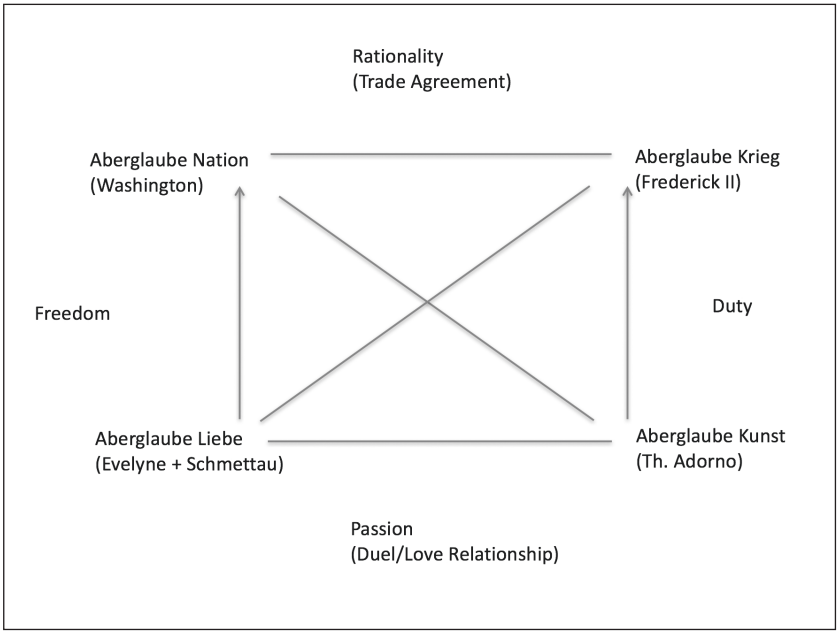

Fig. 5: Semiotic square, "Adorno."

Presumably Unruh is not recommending a mass emigration of West German citizens – democracy refugees, if you will – to the United States – though he himself shuttled back and forth between Germany and the US in evident indecision. It is more likely that Unruh was advocating for a "migration of mentality," a passionate resolve to break with Prussia and Frederick and to embrace the democratic order of Washington in the Federal Republic.

What Unruh's play leaves unexpressed, but the semiotic square brings into view, is that the dilemma was resolved on the level of emotion (and fantasy) exclusively and not on the level of reason. The contradictions within and between the two models of Enlightenment governance have not been overcome, even if, for a time, we embraced the American illusion as Frederick embraced Washington. Schmettau's tendentious critique of America early in the play – that it places material and nationalist interests ahead of idealism and freedom – seems to be born out in the present historical moment, halfway through President Trump's term. At the same time, Schmettau's trenchant pacifist accusations against the toll of Frederick's militarism go unanswered in the play and find a ready counterpart in the millions of war and climate refugees failing to find humane accommodation in Europe and the US. And that is why now, in the year 2019, for the first time since 1954, we can imagine a staging of *Duell an der Havel* that includes the image of

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Trump and Merkel at the G7, with roles reversed, at an impasse again that invites us to renewed analysis and critique of the political structures and principles laid down in the "Treaty of Amity and Commerce" more than 230 years ago.

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Alissa Rubinstein

The 614th Commandment: A Documentary Play about how American Jews Feel about Germany Today

How has postwar American Judaism depicted and thought about the Holocaust and Germany? How is that changing as the last survivors pass away – or is it changing at all? These questions form the core of my 2016 play *The 614th Commandment*, which investigates the role and function of history and memory in the American Jewish community, especially regarding how the Holocaust has functioned as something that the community coalesces around to help define its identity.

In my play, I wanted to explore what Esther Jilovsky, Jordana Silverstein, and David Slucki scrutinize in their 2016 book *In the Shadows of Memory: The Holocaust and the Third Generation*, namely, "the transfer of memory, trauma, history and identity across generations," and more specifically "the aspects of these things that members of the third generation make anew."[1] I zeroed in on what Jilovsky and her colleagues term "inherited memory," with a focus on my own generation: the grandchildren of Holocaust survivors, or what is called the third generation. I chose to focus more precisely on attitudes towards Germany, because learning German and moving to Germany is the way that I personally chose to "make anew" this history for myself. My approach was further influenced by the German diplomat Rolf Schütte, who, as a visiting fellow at the American Jewish Committee in New York from November 2004 to March 2005, said that "American Jewish organizations may have to reinforce their efforts (through education, dialogue, and exchange) to counter a tendency in the American Jewish community to ignore Germany's present and to focus exclusively on its past."[2] I hoped to be able to contribute to this process of education, dialogue, and exchange with my play.

I have experienced a lot of pushback from the Jewish community for my decision to learn German, study in Germany, and ultimately live in the country, particularly from members of the first and second generations: Holocaust survivors and their children. Jilovsky, Silverstein, and Slucki note that while members of the

1 Esther Jilovsky, Jordana Silverstein, and David Slucki. "Introduction: The Third Generation," in *In the Shadows of Memory: The Holocaust and the Third Generation*, ed. by Esther Jilovsky, Jordana Silverstein, and David Slucki (London & Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2016), 2.

2 Rolf Schütte. "German-Jewish Relations, Today and Tomorrow: A German Perspective." The American Jewish Committee: New York, March 2005, URL: http://deutscheshaus.as.nyu.edu/docs/IO/6835/German_Jewish.pdf (accessed November 11, 2016), 22.

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second generation received their Holocaust memory from their parents, that is, the first generation, "the third generation's sense of the Holocaust is based on their grandparents as Holocaust survivors, as well as their parents as members of the second generation." The third generation therefore has a "mediated memory of the Holocaust" that unites their connections to the first and second generations, as well as the third generation's engagement with both collective and cultural memory.[3]

My generation's inherited memory has been criticized by the first and second generations for departing from both the second generation's inherited memory as well as the first generation's personal memories. The second generation grew up in close contact with the first generation, while the third generation grew up with far more geographical, chronological, and genealogical distance to the original trauma. My generation also grew up in a post-1970s world of Holocaust consciousness in America, marked by the opening of numerous Holocaust museums, untold numbers of survivor testimony projects, and a huge amount of books, TV documentaries, feature films, and other forms of mediated Holocaust information.

The 614th Commandment looks at all of this from the specific perspective of a member of the third generation conducting interviews with American Jewish people of all ages and backgrounds. Nicole Fox notes that members of the third generation are both familiar with the survivors of the Holocaust and yet "distant enough from the event that they did not experience a great deal of the everyday trauma that the children of Holocaust survivors experienced."[4] Moreover, the "third generation has also grown up in an environment where there is a plethora of Holocaust literature and discourse," sharply contrasting with the experiences of the generations before.[5] I believe my being part of the third generation lends my general point of view, as well as my play, an exciting edge, and one that has up until now been mostly neglected in both scholarly and artistic output (Jilovsky, Silverstein, and Slucki's book, for example, was only published in 2016).

More importantly, I chose the medium of theater because I strongly believe that its mixture of creativity and "liveness," with the addition of the research base required by documentary theater, best served my goals. That moment of shared space and time in the theater, with performers and spectators co-creating meaning together, seeking to challenge and understand their own notions of the world, is

3 Jilovsky, Silverstein, and Slucki, "Introduction: The Third Generation," 9.

4 Nicole Fox. "Their history is part of me: Third Generation American Jews and Intergenerational Transmission of Memory, Trauma and History." *Moreshet, Journal for the Study of the Holocaust and Antisemitism* 8 (2010): 7-35, 7.

5 Fox, "Their history is part of me," 7.

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of deep importance to me. As a producer of *The Laramie Project*[6] in high school, I personally experienced the power of theater – specifically politically, socially, and historically engaged documentary theater – to create opportunities for discussion, learning, and growth in local, national, and even international communities.

Public historian David Dean, theater historian Yana Meerzon, and performance theoretician Kathryn Prince, the editors of 2015's *History, Memory, Performance*, the first scholarly work to address the role of theater in public history, define public history quite simply as, "the study of how people consume and shape history."[7] Academic historians frequently criticize public history for being less academically rigorous and overly focused on accessibility to the general public. A similar resistance exists for related forms of public engagement with the past: performance and live theater. Dean, Meerzon, and Prince counter that resistance, noting that "through performance historical consciousness and historical understanding are shaped and nurtured."[8] Performance can also present opportunities for public history practitioners to "create affective encounters for the public," just like other mediums and methods that are already recognized by academic historians such as history museums or historical fiction.

The 614th Commandment is a documentary play. Broadly speaking, documentary theater is "fact-based performance composed using archival materials such as trial transcripts, official or government documents, iconic visual images or video footage, newspaper reporting, historical writing, and recorded interviews."[9] Fidelity to the source material and levels of "authenticity" vary from playwright to playwright. Documentary theater differs from novels and films, as well as more traditional plays, in that it offers a multiperspective and three-dimensional way to understand real life experiences.

While my play falls under the general heading of documentary theater, its use of transcribed interviews renders it even more specifically an example of verbatim theater. Verbatim theater is a subset of documentary theater that is created using found speech constructed "verbatim" from oral history interviews. Artists often choose to use verbatim theater to publicly consider relevant issues because it reads

6 *The Laramie Project* is a documentary play by Moisés Kaufman and the Tectonic Theater Project about the 1998 murder of Matthew Shephard in Laramie, Wyoming. Shephard was murdered for being gay, and the play traces the story of the circumstances leading to his death, the ensuing trial, and the effects of these events on the town. The play had its world premiere at the Denver Center Theater Company in 2002.

7 David Dean, Yana Meerzon, and Kathryn Prince. "Introduction" in *History, Memory, Performance,* ed. by David Dean, Yana Meerzzon, and Kathryn Prince (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 4.

8 Dean, Meerzon, Prince, "Introduction," 9.

9 Derek Paget. "Documentary Theatre," in *The Continuum Companion to Twentieth-Century Theatre*, ed. by Colin Chambers. London, 2002, URL: http://www.dramaonlinelibrary.com/genres/documentary-theatre-iid-2482 (accessed November 10, 2014).

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as more authentic for audiences. Verbatim theater takes true words and puts them in a new context.

Categorizing it even further, *The 614th Commandment* is a staged oral history. The term "staged oral history" positions theater practitioners of this type of work on the border of the oral history and documentary theater worlds. Furthermore, it is not only the creation process that includes a variety of voices, but also the final script. Staged oral history puts a number of community voices onstage at once, displaying not one but many subjects.[10] The playwright still makes the final editing decisions, however, so all those subjectivities are crafted into the particular story that the playwright wants to tell.

When I embarked on the journey that would become *The 614th Commandment*, I decided that I did not want to approach the interview process with a narrative structure already laid out. I wanted to capture as much of the diversity of the American Jewish community as humanly possible with respect to age, nationality, birthplace, language background, gender identity, sexual identity, and level of religious observance or non-observance. I generally began an interview by getting consent to turn on the recorder as soon as possible; most of my interviews began with a conversation about the recorder itself, followed by an explanation of my project. Often this would naturally segue into fruitful discussions of my topic. Because I was able to promise my subjects anonymity if they preferred, they could speak freely. Interviews always ended with the interviewee providing verbal consent for me to use their interviews in the play. Anyone who wished to remain anonymous was able to do so.

In addition to deciding whom to interview in the first place, I needed to decide which interviews to transcribe, and then which interviews to use in the piece, i.e. which points of view to focus on. I interviewed many people from a variety of backgrounds: Modern Orthodox, Conservative, Reform, Reconstructionist, secular, atheist, Sephardic, and Ashkenazi. Extreme rightwing, extreme leftwing. I interviewed Iranian Jews, Russian Jews, Greek Jews, Tunisian Jews, Mexican Jews. Gay, straight, bisexual, and transgender Jews. I interviewed a six-year-old. I interviewed a ninety-two-year-old. I interviewed converts and adoptees, survivors and their descendants, people who work at Holocaust museums, Israelis, rabbis, cantors, Hebrew school teachers, public school teachers, and university professors. I did not interview any Jews of sub-Saharan African or East Asian descent, although not for lack of trying. I interviewed rabbis from all the major American denominations, and some of the less major denominations (there is an atheist Society for Humanistic Judaism in Los Angeles that holds services every week but has removed all prayers that mention God). What to do, in a region where there

10 Ryan M. Claycomb. "(Ch)oral History: Documentary Theatre, the Communal Subject and Progressive Politics." *Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism* 17 (2003): 97–98.

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are enough Moroccan Jews in the San Fernando Valley alone to warrant at least three separate synagogues? Ultimately, I had to come to terms with the fact that I was not going to get anything close to a statistically representative sample of Jewish people living in Southern California. Then again, that was never my goal; from the beginning I had approached the project from the perspective of an oral history playwright more so than that of a traditional historian or sociologist.

I conducted the first round of interviews in the Greater Los Angeles Area between December 2014 and February 2015, and the second in August and September of 2015. Approximately 110 interviews were with individuals, and 15 were with groups of two or more people. Interview length ranged from 20 minutes to over 6 hours, with an average of 45-90 minutes. I also corresponded with several people solely via email. I would estimate that I have about 200 individuals recorded "on tape".

I spent late fall and early winter 2015 sifting through interviews, transcribing, and feeling overwhelmed by the sheer amount of material I had collected. I met Adam Donald, a professional director and actor from New Zealand, at English Theatre Berlin, and we began meeting once a week starting in February. I would send him lightly edited transcripts that we would then read together and discuss, homing in on a narrative and goals together. We were accepted into English Theatre Berlin's Expat Expo in late March, and cast Kellen York and Carrie Getman, both professional American actors based in Berlin, in early April.

The first few weeks of rehearsal consisted primarily of table reads. I would generate raw transcripts and edit them. These were the characters that were delivered to Carrie and Kellen at the table read meetings, where they would then read through them for us out loud. Adam, Carrie, Kellen, and I would debate the merits of the characters and their monologues and together try to distill the essence of each person's story and what pieces seemed the most dramatically viable. Their points of view were immensely valuable. I was also the only person involved in the creative process who is descended from Holocaust survivors, and the only Jew (although Kellen is half-Jewish). My collaborators' more distanced points of view allowed us as a group to find the pieces of text that would work best on stage.

In both the table read rehearsals as well as the regular rehearsals, Adam and I created our own set of rules regarding how to deal with our interview sources as ethically as possible. The main rule was that we had far less leeway with characters whose full names were being used in the script, whereas composite characters and anonymous characters could be tweaked a bit more to fit the requirements of the dramatic structure and the story we wanted to tell.

After we finished the script, I took a figurative step back and Adam assumed a bigger creative role. The actors crafted their characters on their own, primarily using

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Chekhovian character creation techniques,[11] while Adam took a more Brechtian approach in that he elected to foreground the text and the physical presence of the actors, rather than the characters' emotional lives. *The 614th Commandment* premiered at 8pm on 2 June 2016 at a little after 8:00 p.m. in the black box theater at English Theater Berlin | International Performing Arts Center on Fidicinistrasse 40 in Kreuzberg, in front of a sold-out audience of over 150 people.

The audience was able to clearly see that both actors were onstage at the same time for the entire length of the show. They were both dressed in black, and there was no set except for a plain black chair. They gave their monologues primarily to the audience directly, and then shed the character when they moved to the side. The lighting itself was kept simple: warm and unobtrusive. None of the design elements were meant to be symbolic in any way, and there was no specifically defined location or setting for any character.

Additionally, the original production used a style of presentation meant not to distract from the text. The production did not depict the play's section or part titles onstage in any way. Breaks between sections were not delineated, while breaks between parts were made quite clear by the two actors—either one would stop talking and the other would start, or the same actor would stop talking, and then start again as a noticeably different person via changes in physicality, voice, behavior (each character that utilized the chair did so differently), and location on stage.

It was deeply important to me that any sense of cultural voyeurism be avoided. As the playwright, I sought to create distance primarily via the fragmented, non-linear structure of the piece, which was meant to be destabilizing, as well as the use of two actors playing multiple characters. I also foregrounded the piece with the knowledge that the play was based on interviews; several characters allude to the original moment of the interview ("After our phone conversation…" or "You and I, by the way…"). The description of the show on the theater's website said that the play was based off of real interviews conducted by the author in Los Angeles and based on her (my) experiences as an American Jewish woman living in Berlin. With that information, the audience could infer that the play is set in Los Angeles, and that when characters say things like "You can start now" or "When you called me…" that they're referring to me, the interviewer.

The 614th Commandment can be staged with anywhere between one and ten actors. As the author, I have included absolutely no stage directions in the text, the intention being that the monologues and dialogues can be better adapted to different performance spaces and contexts, thereby making the piece more accessible and performable for a wide variety of production opportunities, such as schools, community centers, and places of worship, as well as traditional theaters.

11 See Rose Whyman. *The Stanislavsky System of Acting: Legacy and Influence in Modern Performance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

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There are ten characters in total, five women and five men. The women are Katie, a palliative care social worker at a Jewish hospital; Rachel, a rabbinic school student; Brenda, a recently retired administrator for a Jewish social services organization; Karen, a suburban nurse; and Doris Wise Montrose, a child of Holocaust survivors who hosts politically right-leaning lectures and runs an organization called Jews Can Shoot. The men are Yonatan, a Hebrew school teacher; Daniel, a Modern Orthodox rabbi and hospital chaplain; Steve, Karen's husband; Michael Berenbaum, the creator of the United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum (USHMM); and Bernie Rosenzweig (Z"L), a German-Jewish immigrant from Brooklyn. I chose these people because they showed the widest range of common points of view I came across regarding Germany during my research process, from the most relaxed to the most extreme, and also made a number of intriguing comments regarding Holocaust memory and contemporary American Judaism.

The three characters whose full names appear in the script are real people. They gave me verbal permission during their recorded interviews to use their full real names in the piece. As is made clear in the play, Doris Wise Montrose specifically forbade me from using any piece of her interview if I did *not* also use her real name. As the creator of the USHMM, and a preeminent Holocaust historian, Michael Berenbaum was an important authenticating voice in the play. His role in creating the USHMM and his stance on the universalist approach to Holocaust history is known to those in the history community. While Berenbaum does not specifically identify himself until the very end, his presence adds a sense of validation from the traditional academic history and public history communities. Bernie Rosenzweig also makes it clear in the play why he would like his real name to be used – it is a form of protest. He does not want to hide. Like Doris, he fully stands behind what he says.

The remaining seven characters are pseudonyms. Brenda, Yonatan, Karen, and Steve are all based on one real person each who simply preferred to remain anonymous, while Daniel, Rachel, and Katie are composite characters.

The script is organized into five sections, entitled "Arrival," "Going," "Dealing with It," "614," and "Tradition." Each section is made up of between eight and thirteen parts, and each of those parts also has a title. The parts range in length from one sentence to one paragraph to one page. For the most part, the titles of the moments reflect the topic of each moment, though in some cases the title is more symbolic. To grasp the structure of the play, it is helpful to examine a list of the play's "scenes":

I. Arrival

1. Something weird (Katie)
2. Blessed (Yonatan)
3. What we know (Karen and Steve)

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4. The "h"/How we got out (Bernie Rosenzweig)
5. The original trauma (Katie)
6. I'm just Jewish (Daniel)
7. Porn (Doris Wise Montrose)
8. The world that they had lost (Michael Berenbaum)
9. Association (Rachel)
10. Recognize the signs (Daniel)
11. The obligation of every child of survivors (Doris Wise Montrose)
12. Consumed (Michael Berenbaum)

II. Going

1. Invitation (Bernie Rosenzweig)
2. Some kind of blasphemy (Karen and Steve)
3. Realer (Daniel)
4. Thoroughly misbehaving (Michael Berenbaum)
5. A genetic thing (Brenda)
6. Reaction (Bernie Rosenzweig)
7. Europe (Doris Wise Montrose)
8. A conversation (Bernie Rosenzweig)
9. Liz, or why I am not afraid of the German language (Rachel)
10. Very strange (Bernie Rosenzweig)
11. No strong feelings either way (Brenda)
12. The second time I learned it was a thing (Rachel)
13. October (Yonatan)

III. Dealing with it

1. If you scratch a non-Jew…(Daniel)
2. You and I and us (Doris Wise Montrose)
3. My Israel thing (Yonatan)
4. The easiest way to get booed by a Jewish audience (Michael Berenbaum)
5. Community (Rachel)
6. A sense of strength (Doris Wise Montrose)
7. A broad view (Rachel)
8. A biblical view/I guess it would be good if they lose (Daniel)
9. Trust (Karen and Steve)
10. Horns (Daniel)
11. Tell me the truth (Karen and Steve)
12. When I teach kids about the Holocaust (Yonatan)
13. I'm a liar! (Karen and Steve)

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IV. 614

1. Real (Yonatan)
2. Repeat (Katie)
3. Peace and love, except for Germans! (Karen and Steve)
4. The buddy system (Daniel)
5. Escape (Brenda)
6. Holocausted out (Michael Berenbaum)
7. I don't need to hear anything/ A long memory (Doris Wise Montrose)
8. Genesis (Daniel)

V. Tradition

1. Moving on (Karen and Steve)
2. Too much (Daniel)
3. The language (Karen and Steve)
4. People who do bad things (Yonatan)
5. The 614th commandment (Rachel)
6. Danger (Doris Wise Montrose)
7. Clarity (Michael Berenbaum)
8. The ultimate professional (Karen and Steve)
9. The ending (Daniel)
10. Mom (Doris Wise Montrose)
11. What makes this night different from all other nights? (Michael Berenbaum)
12. That's it (Brenda)
13. Numbers (Yonatan)
14. The god thing (Rachel)
15. Learn something (Daniel)
16. I want you to get it right (Doris Wise Montrose)
17. #lol (Michael Berenbaum)

The parts are all monologues (except for the dialogue between Karen and Steve, who always appear together, even when Karen is the only one who speaks). Lisa Hays reminds us that, "to truly understand the process of theatricalizing oral history, it is important to see how the playwright has shaped the text—how characters are identified and introduced, how transitions are created, how time is handled, how one character's story is punctuated by the line of another character..."[12]

12 Lisa Hays. "Theatricalizing Oral History: How British and American Theatre Artists Explore Current Events and Contemporary Politics in the Journey from Interview to Performance" (Phd. diss., The State University of New York at Buffalo, 2008), 12.

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The script of *The 614th Commandment* is painstakingly constructed. Where the characters are speaking to the interviewer/audience, where they are speaking to another character onstage, when they hear what a previous character just said and comment on it, when they argue, when they interrupt, when they deliberately try to provoke, and when they deliberately try to lighten the mood – these instances are all carefully planned.

The monologues in *The 614th Commandment* are arranged so that each monologue reflects on the previous one in some way, providing additional information, complementing what was said, or directly contradicting it for effect.

The idea is that the play teaches the audience how to watch it; when it begins it can be hard to understand what is going on, since most of the action of the piece is subtle, to be found in the juxtapositions between characters' words—and in our production all ten characters were played by two actors. My goal was to start slowly, introducing the characters, themes, and structure of the play, before speeding up the rhythm of the piece and diving into more difficult material. I wanted the piece to feel more chaotic and confusing, deliberately reflecting the fragmented nature of memory.

The first section, "Arrival," is both an arrival in Germany, an introduction to each character (except Brenda, who first appears in the second section), and a primer on the piece's structure. The first monologue, for example, "Something weird," is a literal arrival in Germany: Katie sets the scene by recounting what it felt like to fly into Berlin for the first time. She remembers that it felt both "creepy" and "familiar," and jokingly refers to the idea of a "communal unconscious" that brought her back to the 1940s, almost like a time machine – a reference to the concept of a collective Jewish memory – but acknowledges that both Germany's familiarity and its creepiness probably have more to do with the media representations and cultural memory of "Germany" with which she grew up. The vacillation between the creepy and the familiar, the influence of a "communal unconsciousness" and the influence of popular representations of history like movies and books are recurring themes throughout the play.

The second monologue of the play, "Blessed," addresses me/the audience directly and underscores the main topic. Yonatan, a gregarious, larger-than-life personality based off the youth engagement director at my parents' synagogue, marches in and tells us his birth sign before chuckling to himself and saying, "No, I'm kidding, you're doing the thing, Germany. We can start now, I'm sorry." This form of direct address to "you," originally meaning me, the interviewer, during the actual interview, but in performance addressed directly to the audience, is meant to be jarring. It is intended to remind audience members of the original interviews that the monologues and dialogues are taken from, and also to remind them that everything they are hearing is being filtered through my lens. I am not purporting to present an "objective" presentation of my "objective" research. These interviews

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were deeply personal and subjective due to my family background and personal views, and the audience should never feel like they are receiving some sort of purely objective history lesson.

The next characters the audience is introduced to, in "What we know," are Karen and Steve, a suburban couple in their mid-sixties who are actually good friends of my parents whom I have known for years. They are the only two characters who fully interact with one another, and their connection is the beating heart of the show. Karen and Steve operate as a team, feeding off one another and finishing each other's sentences. They are very silly and light-hearted, but almost immediately betray a tinge of darkness beneath the jokes. The intention is that the audience laughs at/with them, but it is an uncomfortable laugh, because there is a lot of honesty and truth behind what they are saying. Their views on Germans are emblematic of what I found in my interviews with second generation American Jews, and their descriptions of "what [they] know" set a baseline for the play as a whole.

The next character to be introduced is Bernie Rosenzweig, in "The 'h'/How we got out." Bernie is the oldest character in the show and the only one who could be construed as a Holocaust survivor. He left Dortmund, Germany, for New York City as a child and lost a number of family and friends in the Holocaust. He went back to Germany as part of the Invitation Program for Former Persecuted Citizens of Dortmund. Bernie is a very difficult character and someone we struggled mightily with during the workshop and rehearsal process. Bernie was clearly marked by a deep sense of loss, and along with that came a very intense and at times malicious bitterness. Especially given that the show was going to premiere in Germany, I thought it would be especially poignant to have the oldest character be a German who had fled as a child. He comes at the material both as an old man reflecting on his life, someone who knows the story of how his family escaped and how he grew up, and as a young boy caught up in events he only partly understands—a young boy who used to have a different name and then lost his "h" when he arrived as a refugee in a new country (his name was originally spelled "Bernhard").

Generally speaking, all of the interview material had to be carefully organized to relieve the audience from the emotional intensity of the play. Lighter scenes, designed for comic relief but still relevant to the topic, had to be interspersed at the appropriate moments throughout the script to provide breathing room for the audience. We knew from the beginning that Bernie was a powerhouse character whose story and general attitude would be shocking. We also knew that, given that this script was being created for a performance in Germany, we risked completely alienating our audience members by having an angry and bitter Holocaust survivor just verbally attack them for the duration of the play. We had to strike a balance, shocking the audience, but not to the point of disengagement. We ended

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up cutting Bernie's monologues down to the bare minimum and concentrating them at the beginning of the show for this reason.

The next character to be introduced, after another monologue from Katie ("The original trauma"), is Daniel, who is a composite of a Modern Orthodox Jewish chaplain of a major Jewish hospital in Los Angeles, a Conservative rabbinic intern, the well-known Conservative rabbi David Wolpe, and the rabbi emeritus of the biggest Reconstructionist synagogue in the world, Steven Carr Reuben. In his introductory monologue, "I'm just Jewish," the audience meets their first rabbi. Daniel goes on to both humorously and quite eloquently discuss his experiences with anti-Semitism and his struggle with how to bring together his knowledge of history and awareness of current events with the hope that he finds in traditional Jewish life and texts.

He is followed by Doris Wise Montrose and "Porn." Doris is the founder and president of Children of Jewish Holocaust Survivors, a Los Angeles-area non-profit that seems to consist entirely of Doris and her Jews Can Shoot organization (tagline: "Nothing Says Never Again Like An Armed Jew," logo: a Star of David made out of rifles). Doris is, for me, easily the most captivating character in the show. She is direct, and intelligent, and funny, and, frankly, very scary. She speaks poignantly of her family's experiences in the Holocaust. Her anger at the failure of the international community to prevent war crimes and genocides post-World War II is palpable, and yet her way of fighting against that, her way of reacting to her background and her history, is extreme and radically different from the paths of the other characters in the show.

The Doris that came through both in the original interview as well as in the final performance is a person deeply psychologically affected by the Holocaust experiences of her parents. Her need is simple: to stay safe. She is upset by the perceived weakness of her parents' generation, their inability to fight back, and so she wants to enable future possible victims to fight back. Her major speech on genocides that came after the Holocaust is telling. She speaks powerfully and with great passion about preventing future trauma, about how peoples' desire to extract meaning from tragedy prevents them from actually, physically doing something to prevent tragedy in the present moment.

Next, Michael Berenbaum is introduced in "The world that they had lost." Berenbaum takes a universalist approach to the Holocaust and invokes the metaphor of the Jewish holiday of Passover, a ritualized remembering of the Exodus from Egypt. Judaism as a religion encourages individuals to nurture personal and deeply intimate connections to historical events that they did not themselves experience. That personal connection can lead to a pervading anxiety, but Berenbaum also argues that when re-imagined, the same connection that sometimes encourages a form of PTSD in the greater Jewish community can be used for positive future change, like in the contemporary uses of the Passover story. In the final lines of the

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play, Berenbaum directly challenges both myself as interviewer and the audience as viewers of the play to do something with what I/they have just heard. He specifically says, "Let's see what you do with it," where "it" refers to both the discussion he and I just had, as well as the play that the audience has just seen. I conceive of this last line as an invitation to critically reflect on the points the play brings up and to potentially use those reflections in some positive way.

Rachel is the next character introduced, with "Association." She has a much lighter personality and point of view on the themes of the play, specifically because she was pointedly not raised to be afraid (except, of course, for what she tells us in this first monologue, although even her story about being afraid as a child that her father was going to be taken away by the Nazis is played for laughs). She grew up with a German best friend, is the product of an interfaith marriage, and is becoming a rabbi because she genuinely loves Jewish tradition, specifically the focus on social justice and community, and wants to share it.

As Rachel tells us, "the German language has never been scary to me, the people have never been scary to me" – specifically because she grew up with a German best friend and therefore knows an individual German in a context not influenced by the Holocaust. The irony is clear when, in reference to her German best friend's grandma, she says, innocently, happily, "She's exactly what you would think, right?" – and then goes on to talk about how she's just "a ball of grandma" and cooks "downhome German foods." Rachel is not naïve, but she does not see a reason to suffer under the burden of history. She is a truly contemporary, twenty-first century young Jewish woman, aware of and yet unburdened by the Holocaust. She is also the character who explains the play's title to us by way of mentioning Emil Fackenheim,[13] but if anything, she seems exasperated by the idea of being commanded to constantly remember. Rachel is used like this throughout the play; she is aware of but unburdened by history and often functions as an escape valve for the audience, such as when she breaks up Bernie's haranguing by deeply sighing and laughing. She is also often placed in direct confrontation with Doris, who is another strong female character.

The final character to be introduced, in the middle of the second section, "Going," is Brenda. Her character is entirely composed from one interview with a recently retired social worker who worked exclusively with Holocaust survivors in Los Angeles. Brenda is also a lighter character who provides historical background as well as humor.

After "Arrival" introduces us to the play's structure, themes, and characters, "Going" delves into the idea of what it means to go to Germany as an American Jew

13 There are 613 *mitzvot*, or commandments, in the Torah; Fackenheim's 614th commandment is to not grant Hitler a posthumous victory by abandoning Judaism. See Emil L. Fackenheim, *To Mend the World* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1994), 213.

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in the twenty-first century. Bernie's experiences in Germany form the core of this section, but we also hear, for example, from Doris, who can only associate Germany, and Europe as a whole, with death and destruction; Rachel, who has visited Germany and feels positively towards it; and Brenda, who admits that she grew up thinking Germany was evil and has never been there, but also does not have particularly strong feelings about it, even though she spent her career working with Holocaust survivors.

The third section, "Dealing with it," looks more deeply at Holocaust memory in the American Jewish community in the twenty-first century. At this point the oldest character, Bernie, no longer appears in the play – his absence is intentional and meant to be symbolic – and the second and third generation voices take over. Issues addressed in this section range from contemporary anti-Semitism to Holocaust education in schools to Karen's darkly funny fantasy about torturing her elderly German surgery patients to find out what they were doing during World War II.

The fourth section, "614," examines some of the repercussions of the anxiety surrounding memory of the Holocaust in the Jewish community. In addition to Daniel admitting how difficult it can be to work with Holocaust survivors in the hospital and Brenda categorizing her retirement from her job working with survivors as her own personal escape, this section also features Michael Berenbaum's honest account of the effects his work on the United States Holocaust Memorial and Museum had on his young children and Doris' impassioned plea against post-World War II genocides. "614" closes with a Biblical interlude from Daniel.

The fifth and final section is "Tradition." Berenbaum hopes that memory of the Holocaust will ultimately be positively integrated into Jewish tradition in the way that the Exodus from Egypt and Passover function within the liturgical calendar, Daniel suggests that Germans learn more about Judaism, the audience finds out that Doris's Holocaust survivor mother has dementia and has been upstairs the entire time, Doris demands that her real name be used in the play, and, finally, Berenbaum slyly asks what the audience is going to do with the information they have just been given.

The 614th Commandment explores the idea that, in a way, Germany itself, and sometimes also individual German people and the German language, have also become stand-in symbols for evil. In particular, the piece's humor – for example, Yonatan's slow and deliberate eating of a banana while discussing how he teaches young students about the Holocaust – is intended to help audience members take a step back and examine these common tropes from a more distanced perspective. I was inspired by cultural historian Diana Popescu's discussion of Yael Ronen's play *Third Generation* (2009), in which Popescu contends that Ronen uses "laughter to draw attention to the ritualized ways in which the Holocaust is discussed and continues to affect younger generations." Ronen uses humor "as a means to

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create distance from the processes of 'working through' undertaken by the second generation," the goal being to foreground the more critical and detached perspective of the members of the third generation.[14]

I deliberately chose to prioritize these second- and, especially, third-generation voices in my piece. Jilovsky observes that, as the last survivors pass away, "the narratives of nonsurvivors begin to take precedence, indicating a shift from survivor memory to nonsurvivor memory." Additionally, the fact that the third generation represents "the last living link to survivors who nevertheless rely on imagination to witness the Holocaust" is yet another shift, "a crucial one, in which remnants of the Holocaust are still evident, but which are increasingly dominated by later generations' perspectives on the past."[15]

In depicting members of various generations but prioritizing the voices of the second and third generations, with a special emphasis on the third generation, *The 614th Commandment* sought to make this generational turnover the subject of discussion. Throughout the research, interview, workshop, and script creation process, I intended to question these collective memories, specifically regarding attitudes towards Germany. Ultimately, I wanted to stress that these attitudes towards contemporary Germany are symptoms of a bigger issue, namely how we remember and use the Holocaust today within the Jewish community.

The 614th Commandment seeks to examine how the stories we tell about the Holocaust – in the media, in our private lives, in our families, in our communities – develop and change. The play demonstrates that succeeding generations feel differently than earlier ones, but the anxiety concerning Holocaust memory, and with it the demonization of Germany and Germans, continues to be passed down to a certain extent. As Brenda says, even in her postwar secular Jewish community in New York City, she felt that Germans and Germany were evil and scary. She does not recall anyone saying this directly, but the feeling was somehow just there. This feeling has certainly lessened over the years, but my personal experiences learning German, living in Germany, and dealing with anxious, fearful, and at times hateful reactions from members of the American Jewish community to my choices show that we are still dealing with it today. American Jewish millennials in the English Theater Berlin audience in June laughed at depictions of American Jews in their 60s making fun of the German language as intrinsically scary, but they recognized that point of view from their own lives. That is why I embarked on this project in the first place, and that is what I hope audience members walked away from the show thinking about.

14 Diana I. Popescu. "Performance, Memory and Identity: The Israeli Third Generation in Yael Ronen's *Third Generation* Play (2009)," in *In the Shadows of Memory: The Holocaust and the Third Generation*, ed. by Esther Jilovsky, Jordana Silverstein, and David Slucki (London & Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2016), 221.

15 Jilovsky, *Remembering the Holocaust*, 145.

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Anecdotal information, including emails and verbal feedback received after the performance, indicates that audience members had powerful reactions to the show. Dr. Uta Larkey, an associate professor of German at Goucher College in Baltimore, Maryland whose research focuses on oral history and memory of Holocaust survivors and German-Jewish studies, wrote to tell me about her "rave review" of the show.[16] Dr. Jacob S. Eder, a research associate in the contemporary history department at Friedrich Schiller University Jena who recently finished a book about the significance of Holocaust memory for German-American relations since the late 1970s, wrote that, "[he] found [my] play highly intriguing. It also reminded [him] of a few conversations [he had] had in the US [himself]."[17]

I also received a range of feedback from people who were unable to see the live performance, but who did read the script and/or watch the video of the performance. Rabbi emeritus Steven Carr Reuben of Kehillat Israel Reconstructionist Synagogue in Pacific Palisades, California, whom I interviewed for the project and whose words appear in parts of both the rabbi and rabbinic intern characters, read an earlier version of the script and said, "I just read the play and it's fantastic. You did a wonderful job of putting together a totally compelling and believable range of attitudes and emotions about Germany, Germans and how we filter the Holocaust through the lens of our own personal experiences."[18] David Kinberg, my high school European history teacher and a Reform Jew, was also interviewed for the project. In response to the video, he said, "This was awesome! […] I am so impressed with your dialogue. You actually expressed a lot of the sentiments I have personally had."[19]

Doing the show in Germany, for a German (and international) audience, is different than doing the show in the United States. It means something different to have a group of Jewish voices coming together to discuss what they think about Germany *in* Germany. In the United States, the show would be more likely to produce a discussion on how people agree with various points of view in the show, whereas Germans told me that they found the show compelling precisely because they had never heard these sorts of viewpoints before and did not know they existed, or they did know but thought people they knew did not, and they thought being exposed to a variety of contemporary American Jewish voices was important for Germans.

It is also interesting to note that many people fixated on knowing the personal biographies of the director and the actors and were shocked to find out that only one of them was (half) Jewish. This speaks to the fact that people often assume

16 Dr. Uta Larkey, e-mail message to author, June 18, 2016.

17 Dr. Jacob S. Eder, e-mail message to author, June 3, 2016.

18 Rabbi Steven Carr Reuben, e-mail message to author, May 16, 2016.

19 David Kinberg, e-mail message to author, August 26, 2016.

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that this sort of material must be very personal for everyone involved and cannot "just" be theater and stand on its own. This is why I did not want to perform it myself. It's also noteworthy that the non-Jewish actress expressed concerns about being perceived as taking ownership of stories and a history that did not "belong" to her, while the half-Jewish actor said that his Jewish mother was very excited that he was working on something more "meaningful" than usual.

Ultimately, I wanted to show how the American Jewish community is processing its history, prompt audience members to consider why the community is processing it that way, and encourage discussion on how changes could be made to that process in the future. *The 614th Commandment* will ideally have future performances that will mean different things to different audiences. It is a very flexible piece, requiring at minimum one actor and very little in the way of set, costumes, or lighting. I see possibilities for the piece in educational theater, museum theater, and in community theater, particularly at synagogues and Jewish community centers. In order for the play to reach a wider audience in Germany it will have to be translated. I believe there could also be intriguing educational applications of this play in a German school context.

I hope *The 614th Commandment* has encouraged Germans, Jews, and everyone else who has seen or read it to think a bit more critically about how the Holocaust is remembered and *how* it is remembered affects our daily lives and interactions with one another. I also hope that, in a small way, *The 614th Commandment* has contributed to the need for dialogue and can continue to do so in the future.

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Wolfgang Hochbruck

Living History as an Educational Tool and Method in North America and Germany

"I'm doing this to educate people"[1] is a statement often heard from costumed participants doubling as self-appointed historians, speaking to the audience on the sidelines of so-called *reenactments*. This form of open-air history theater enjoys the most popularity in the US, but increasingly also in other parts of the world. Usually, the reenacted event is of a military nature, and in the US that means more often than not a battle from the American Civil War (1861-1865). This does not imply that the two- to three-day event necessarily takes place anywhere near an original battlefield or skirmish site: Civil War battle reenactments may be encountered in any one of the fifty States of the Union. Most frequently, they are hosted in the formerly slave-holding South, where they are part of a plethora of attempts at upholding a positive if reactionary image of the secessionist Confederacy. And they can be encountered in France, Great Britain, New Zealand … and Germany. Theatrical re-plays of history are not only not limited to original sites; they are not even bound to the original country, or world region. There are reenactments of the First World War in North America, just as there are Operation Market Garden (which took place in the Netherlands in 1944) reenactments in Australia. The differences are most visible in the numbers of attendees: Obviously, the 135th anniversary reenactment of the battle of Shiloh in Tennessee will draw more participants and spectators (there were roughly 10,000 active players in April 1997) than a more-or-less generic scenario outside of Davenport, Iowa, where there never was a battle, historically. Or, for that matter, a similarly generic scenario on the military training site near Külsheim in the romantic valley of the Tauber in Southern Germany. One stable factor throughout, regardless of numbers in attendance, period in question, or event format, however, is this: There has rarely been this much history in the sense that so many people from such diverse backgrounds actively participated in its construction. This appears to signal democratization, but the signal is not the message: Current developments in some countries of the European community, including Germany, and especially in the US, indicate that nationalist and illiberal populist movements use formally democratic methods to

1 Alan Archambault. "Reflections on Civil War Reenacting." *Camp Chase Gazette* 21.5 (1994): 34-35. – The author is grateful to Kübra Aydin and Christina Metzger for editorial assistance and suggestions in the process of preparing this paper for publication. All remaining mistakes and incongruencies are of course the responsibility of the author.

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imbalance, and undermine, the very democracies that these countries' political systems are based on. A lot of the impact of these illiberal forces depends on positions towards, and knowledge of, history. The future of liberal democracies thus depends to a large extent on whether responsible forces within the educational system(s) – university, schools, and museums alike – are willing to make use of all the possibilities and opportunities at their disposal.

The alternatives are not exactly inviting. The leveling of cultural hierarchies that appears to be happening with the takeover of historiography by other means in the reenactment scene does not necessarily entail progressive views on the side of the actors. Not that there is always an evil conspiracy behind reactionary messages: Reenactment communities rely to a large extent on older, accessible, and popular historiography. Only a minority has the time and/or the means to stay abreast of current research – and those that do are unfortunately more often than not shunned by professional historians. And then there are the regressive fringes, the "you won't find this in the history books, but…" – types. Their fringe publications are far easier to avoid than their vociferous presence on the "battlefields" where they constitute a clear and present danger, especially when encountered by unsuspecting and receptive members of the public.

In the following, I shall try to elucidate some of the limitations and possibilities that the living history method, and especially live action role play/reenactments (LARP), offer for public education systems. That reenactments, "documentary" living history formats on TV, retro-fashions of all kinds, and even historical pageantry have taken on sizable proportions in everyday life and even more so in non-everyday historical anniversary festivities is not an issue that needs to be debated: The many and diverse theatrical presentations of history are here to stay.

The reluctance of establishment historiography, including the school systems, to engage with living history methods is, to a certain extent, both natural and understandable. There is no living history. There are only varieties of re-constructing pasts either along the lines of majority historiography, or in progressive or regressive adaptation formats. And of course, a lot of what passes for "reenactment" provides an easy target for critical historians, journalists, and self-appointed anti-militarists. The close isomorphy of some highly-dedicated groups and individuals, and their remarkable research levels, are usually ignored in favor of what even the untrained eye is able to detect in terms of historical inaccuracies: the camping coolers and furniture in camps, the cigarettes and non-period food, the modern haircuts and eyeglasses, and the hopelessly inadequate performances. Usually, these hobbyists are below the standard of what among reenactors is referred to as "mainstream" – all-year carnivalists who like battlefield-karaoke, and who often also follow simplistic political ideologies.

The gap between these recreators and the dedicated re-creators does not receive a lot of attention because serious journalists cannot gain much by trying to point

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out how, and why, active participation in a reenactment might provide a basis for a better understanding of history when it is so much easier for them to shoot fish in a barrel. Besides, whereas everything and anything from the Stone Age to the Vietnam War can be reenacted in the US, there are only few historical periods that are uncontroversial in Germany. The most acceptable period representations are Roman, having been collectively authenticated by Markus Junkelmann's experimental archaeology expeditions[2], and, somewhat surprisingly, the so-called "medieval markets" – fun-fairs with music, shows, and food. Surprisingly, since the supposed darkness of the "dark" middle ages was largely one of aristocratic and clerical oppression and dumbing-down of large parts of the population by an oligarchic minority – school-knowledge about which does not seem to have made a dent into the German preference for knights and their ladies. While Americans have their Civil War, during the Germanic romantic and imperial periods,[3] the hegemonial forces established a reverential frame complete with veneration for spectacular ruins, ghosts, and aristocratic heroes, which continued in the school system deep into the 1970s and partly to this day, because it is still supported by a wave of musealization, monumentalization, and historic pageantry reaching back into the nineteenth century. Given this situation, it does not come as much of a surprise that there is next to no knowledge about German participation in the American Civil War, where more than 200,000 German-born men (and many women) worked and fought to preserve the Union and to abolish slavery. Not only that: a significant number of survivors and refugees of the failed revolutions of 1848/49 turned up again in the Union forces, often in leadership positions. And there was a disproportionally high number of Germans among the mostly white officers of the US Colored Troops (USCT), recruited from former slaves and free African-Americans from 1862 onwards. This is a chapter of German democratic and anti-racist history which happened elsewhere, but which can be made useful as a source of identification for youth looking for role models. Heroism and role models are on many state education plans (*Bildungspläne*) for the eighth grade, when students do not like to read a lot but love to see action.

Now if military pageantry and reenactments are not as popular in Germany as they continue to be in the US and other countries, there are of course substantial 20th century historical reasons for this reluctance. A plus-size battle-reenactment performed within the framework and as an official part of a national festivity like

2 Marcus Junkelmann. *Die Legionen des Augustus: Der römische Soldat im archäologischen Experiment* (Mainz: Zabern, 1986).

3 Wolfgang Hochbruck. "Chronosyndrom *Light*: Mittelalter als Projektions- und Rückzugsraum," in *Das Mittelalter zwischen Vorstellung und Wirklichkeit. Probleme, Perspektiven und Anstöße für die Unterrichtspraxis*, ed. by Thomas Martin Buck and Nicola Brauch (Münster: Waxmann, 2011), 217-233.

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the 2012 Borodino reenactment in Russia[4] would be unthinkable, as are public battle festivities like the Gettysburg reenactment of 1998, with its unsurpassed 30,000 active participants. The closest Germans have come so far to anything of the kind was the privately-organized 2013 spectacle in Leipzig celebrating a decisive victory of the Napoleonic period.

Unfortunately, a sort of counter-reenactment organized by the artist Bertram Haude attracted too few participants and disintegrated before they reached the scene, but it left at least an idea of how to deal with the lack of reflection that usually fuels the problematic aspects of the battle-reenactment format.[5] It also indicated how live action role play as history theater can be used as a didactic tool for positive reflection and pro-democratic purposes, because Haude and his little band did exactly what the other reenactors were doing – only they selected a different, less documented and less frequently thematized segment from the historical past: the plight of the sick and the wounded, and the hunger and the misery in the wake of glorious victories as well as defeats. The bandwidth and variety of methods of living history is larger, and more diverse, than the celebratory militarism of reactionary politics of history suggests.

Reenactments, as stated above, are an open type of live action role play and thus an internationally popular form of historical gaming. One main difference between historical reenactment and other branches of live action role play, such as fantasy LARP, is that reenactors do not usually adopt fantasy names, and that they strive for historic "authenticity". However, this exactly is already one of the main points of contention between the reenactment communities on the one side, and academic historians, many teachers, and similar numbers of museum curators on the other. Whereas LARP and other forms of enacted fantasy fiction focus on the gamer crowd and on personal experience, one of the persistent (and in fact founding) myths about reenactments is that they are objective attempts at replicating their various target pasts.

The question frequently left open at this point is *whose* history is being reenacted, by whom, and *why,* or rather with what kind of outcome in mind. Since performance is a form of narrative and cannot be equivocating, the idea voiced by many in the field – that reenactments are not political – may as well be discounted as a political myth.

The origins of this myth lie not in insidious attempts at camouflaging political agenda, but in the popularity and acceptance of the other two main formats of "presenting" the past, experimental archaeology, and the more traditional forms of

4 Regine Nohejl. "Ruhm dir auf ewig, Borodino! Der Vaterländische Krieg im Russland der Gegenwart." *Osteuropa* 63.1 (2013): 61-74.

5 Bertram Haude. "Krieg als Hobby? Das Leipziger Völkerschlacht-Reenactment und der Versuch einer Entgegnung." *Forum Kritische Archäologie* 4 (2015): 1-12.

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living history interpretation in (open-air) museums. The terminological triad can be traced to Jay Anderson,[6] whose article about the three main formats of history theater also introduced the expression "living history" into public discourse. At the time, the didactic practice of what was thought of as living history programs in most open-air museums was largely limited to pockets of historical practices, i.e. older, often retired skilled craftspersons showing their trade to audiences in designated areas, often a workshop transferred to the site complete with tools and patina. Popular trades were, and continue to be, those of weavers, blacksmiths, wheel- and cartwrights, broom-, basket-, and straw-shoemakers, and generally all those trades and their products of which can afterwards be sold in the museum store.

The popularity of experimental archaeology, with the sailing adventures of Thor Heyerdahl in the 1960s as a pivotal moment, added a grander scale to these clandestine operations.[7] With the gradual disappearance of the historical manufacturing trades, a blacksmith using early 20th century tools, and Harm Paulsen's construction and successful application of replicated objects that the bronze-age Ötztal glacier mummy carried[8], become didactically and therewith cognitively almost equidistant for school classes and visitors. Their focus on the object level, and their result in a tangible product, or effect, hide both their embeddedness in a specific sociohistorical situation, and their nature as theatrical performances.

In the decades after 1960, German and American museums took different turns regarding this issue. In the US, the Civil War centenary precipitated an unprecedented surge in reenactment organisation and participation, whereas the acceptance of living history programs in Germany remained almost entirely limited to the individuals displaying their craft.[9] Exceptions, because of their scientific underpinnings, were the endeavours of experimental archaeologists in the wake of historian Markus Junkelmann's traverse of the Alps on the trails of Roman legionaries.[10] Consequently, reports and TV shows about experimental proof of the practical usability or applicability of tools and weaponry, or of trade and migration routes, reach as wide an audience as they do in the US. Also acceptable are historical documentaries on TV using (reen-)actors for scenes representing

6 Jay Anderson. "Living History: Simulating Everyday Life in Living Museums." *American Quarterly* 34 (1982): 290-306.

7 Ralling Christophe. *Thor Heyerdahl: Eventyret og Livsverket* (Oslo: Gyldendal Norsk Forlag, 1989).

8 Volker Arnold. "Laudatio zur Verleihung des 5. Deutschen Archäologiepreises der DGUF an Harm Paulsen." (laudatory speech given at 7. Deutscher Archäologiekongress, 3.-7. Oktober 2011, Bremen).

9 Eva Maria Brownawell. *Die Amerikaner und ihr Krieg: Analyse der Jahrhundertfeier des Civil War in den Vereinigten Staaten von Amerika 1961-1965* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1978).

10 Marcus Junkelmann. *Muli Mariani: Marsch in römischer Legionärsrüstung über die Alpen* (Stuttgart: Schriften des Limesmuseums Aalen, 1985).

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scenarios, or actions, as long as they bear in their shields the official stamp and mark of "documentary" and therefore supposed neutrality.

Intentional History

By comparison, reenactments are not neutral. They are a form of intentional history, even though participants may not be aware of it. It is true that at least as far as the higher quality groups and individuals are concerned, a lot of reenacting effort also goes into detailed attempts at isomorphic replication on the material level, and on which regiments were where at which moment of the day. This detailed knowledge is then presented as educational material, whereas the macrolevel is usually tacitly assumed to be shared knowledge between presenter and audience. However, this is exactly where the intentionality comes in: reenactments, especially battle reenactments, display agonality in a mutually reassuring format between actors and spectators. They recreate events as they supposedly happened, with the supposition largely remaining unquestioned in favor of a suggested agency on the side of participants. As re-enactments, they not only terminologically superscribe the original events with a narrative coherence, and often closure, that strips these events of their inherent contingencies and makes them retroactively *enactments* of the sense-making process that followed them. The majority of reenactments thus constitute attempts at conserving an increasingly unstable grip on a past as it was in the schoolbooks that the reenactors, their parents, and grandparents grew up with.

As a theatrical re-staging of past events, reenactments go far back. As educational tools in a wider sense, their use is almost as old. Originally, they were either religiously motivated and of a ceremonial nature, supposedly recreating an original belief-inspired event, or a direct godly intervention, or else they were propaganda performances for audiences separated from the original heroic deeds through time and space. From the Catholic Church and Napoleonic France, reenactments moved on to more secular cultural formations in the nineteenth century, when Civil War veterans reenacted themselves, and the Southern para-aristocracy and other aristocrats all over Europe dressed up as medieval characters inspired by Sir Walter Scott and other writers of historical novels. The difference from earlier recreational forms of medievalism during the reign of Emperor Maximilian and the Romantic age was that the 19th century did not rely on the more fantastic *chansons de geste* as resources, but on historiography written by, and approved of by, the eminent historians of the period. Walter Scott's and James Fenimore Cooper's inscription of fictional characters into this researched history opened the floodgates for the reenactment of established historical factualities, with the reen-

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actors taking on the roles of historical characters. With the separation of time and space in the creation of romantic ruins (with their decay arrested, or even partially reversed), and then open-air folklore museums from the end of the nineteenth century, re-living pasts seemed to become a – pun unavoidable – recreational possibility.

Apart from some clubs, however, and pockets of historically-inspired partying, there was relatively little in the way of historical reenactments by ordinary citizens during the first half of the 20th century. Costumed interpretation in museums likewise started slowly, faster in the US than elsewhere, with Freeman Tilden providing a first theoretical basis.[11] However, and this is the decisive moment, these two forms of historical representation developed parallelly, and with interfacing margins: Some museums started their own (costumed) interpretation programs, other museums at least work with volunteers –- and those volunteers are often recruited from the ranks of local / regional reenactment groups.

By comparison, few German museums ever attempted to raise their own troupes (one exception is Kiekeberg near Hamburg[12]) of civilian farmers and artisans. A few cases initially looked promising, with historically fairly accurate theatrical programs in German museums offered and implemented by reenactment companies. However, the museum directors upon closer inquiry admitted that they had only cooperated with the reenactors in order to attract more visitors.[13] Given that what they received were carefully scripted and staged scenarios, this covert disdain appears even more incomprehensible. And just when a more serious debate about the possibilities and ranges of high-quality living history programs in museums got under way after 2000, a paunchy "Germanic" reenactor openly displayed an SS-tattoo at a city fair accompanying a celebrated museum exhibition, which by and large terminated the discussion. At the same time, attempts at establishing independent quality management did not get off the ground due to lack of funding. The theoretical foundations were established in a series of museum workshops.

11 Freeman Tilden. *Interpreting Our Heritage* (Chapel Hill: University of Northern Carolina Press, 1957).

12 Heike Duisberg. "Gelebte Geschichte 1804: Ein Türöffner in die Vergangenheit. Das Freilichtmuseum am Kiekeberg," in *Living History in Freilichtmuseen: Neue Wege der Geschichtsvermittlung*, ed. by Heike Duisberg (Rosengarten-Ehestorf: Schriften des Freilichtmuseums am Kiekeberg, 2008), 60-78.

13 Michael Faber. "Living History – Lebendige Geschichte oder Geschichte (er)leben?: Möglichkeiten, Methoden und Grenzen am Beispiel des Rheinischen Freilichtmuseums Kommern," in *Living History im Museum: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer populären Vermittlungsform*, ed. by Jan Carstensen, Uwe Meiners, and Ruth-E. Mohrmann (Münster: Waxmann, 2008), 117-133. Cf. Uwe Meiners. "Verlebendigungsstrategien im Freilichtmuseum: Gedanken über Chancen und Probleme populärer Vermittlungsversuche," in *Living History im Museum: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer populären Vermittlungsform*, ed. by Jan Carstensen, Uwe Meiners, and Ruth-E. Mohrmann (Münster: Waxmann, 2008), 161-174.

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Education for Citizenship

What a progressive and positive approach to living history interpretation can do even without a lot of training, but with a coherent didactic concept, became visible in Offenburg / Baden in September 1997. On the occasion of the 150th anniversary of a meeting of democrats in the vanguard of the revolutions of 1848/49, the city's manager of cultural affairs, Hans-Joachim Fliedner, convinced everybody from the city mayor to local sports clubs to celebrate in style. Burda, one of Germany's largest fashion publishers with their company seat in Offenburg, printed and provided historical sewing patterns. With 4,000 costumed participants, including reenactors and theater troupes, and more than 100,000 visitors, the *Offenburger Freiheitsfest* became the biggest, happiest, and most colorful living history party at least on the German record.

What can be done if professional training and scholarly reflection are available is visible from what the program directors in the Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia, restoration project call "Education for Citizenship". The partially restored 18th century capital of the Commonwealth of Virginia has, over the course of almost a century, morphed from a reactionary celebration of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant and predominantly male late-colonial culture to a critical yet constructive and educational view of every one of these hegemonial issues. Williamsburg has been in the vanguard of developments in the field of living history interpretation and museum theater for decades.[14] Earlier than others, Williamsburg saw that just hiring aging practitioners of dying trades was going to lead into a literal dead end. They formed an education department and started apprenticing young people to their old blacksmiths, cartwrights, and printers. They were among the first to hire permanent staff for costumed interpretations and to develop coherent and comprehensive interpretation programs. They started breeding farm animals back to their eighteenth-century size and type. They started operating with first-person interpreters attempting to stay in character throughout the opening hours, and they were the first to rethink their insistence on the format when it became apparent that too many visitors had nothing better to do than to try and trip up the interpreters. Moreover, the limitations of a first-person approach – how many

14 On the topic, see Cary Carson. "Colonial Williamsburg and the Practice of Interpretive Planning in American History Museums." *The Public Historian* 20.3 (1998): 11-51; Richard Handler and Eric Gable. *The New History in an Old Museum. Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham: Duke UP, 1997); Richard Handler, Eric Gable, and Anna Lawson. "On the Uses of Relativism: Fact, Conjecture, and Black and White Histories at Colonial Williamsburg." *American Ethnologist* 19.4 (1992): 791-805; Richard Handler and Eric Gable. "The Authority of Documents at Some American History Museums." *The Journal of American History* 81.1 (1994): 119-136; Martine Teunissen. *Representations of the Past in Public Spheres. Experiencing the Past: The Reconstruction and Recration of History at Colonial Williamsburg* (Oegstgeest: Beleef Het Verleden, 2016).

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people really do have an understanding of their current cultural, social, and political situation, *and* can communicate it to visitors? – became overtly apparent and led to another overhaul of didactic methodologies. With the aid of leading European practitioners like Mark Wallis, they divided tasks and went beyond the mere interpretation of historical trades and places towards interlocking, week-long theatrical shows narrating the histories of Williamsburg, with special focus on the last years of the War of Independence.

Theatrical presentations of history in Williamsburg do not stop at reiterating well-known stories of Lord Dunsmore, Benedict Arnold, and General Cornwallis. They also tackle controversial topics like slavery, generating international headlines when they staged a slave-auction in the early 1990s.[15] Consequently, they also desegregated their African-American interpretations. Now everybody can get into the role of a slave, a burgher citizen, a British soldier, or an American patriot. This last step is of particular importance. Most of the "posts-" in critical discourse upon closer inspection turn out to be little more than denials that the conditions to which they are supposed to be the "post-" persist. The living history programs at Williamsburg are aiming at a condition when actors and audiences can be unconcernedly quiet, and accepting, about issues of race: "authenticity" is not a question of skin color.

The learning effects are quite literally observable in the faces and physical demeanor of members of the audience. Seeing ethnic Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic and African interpreters perform together triggers visible reactions indicating that, and how, an ingrained yet subconscious view has been shaken.

Similarly, when a British loyalist is supposed to be tarred and feathered, the audience participation – invited and encouraged in a number of situations – is used as leverage when some costumed actors, carefully interspersed in the mob action, start interfering and ask whether the right to free speech was not one of the important aims of the American Revolution. It is very encouraging to see how quickly even the typical loud-mouthed, self-appointed patriots are deflated in this scene, often to the surprise of their children.

None of the currently operational German open-air museums with their strongly folklore-bound agenda has been able to follow suit. Whereas many of them do have what is called a museum pedagogy section, this rarely rises above and beyond skill-oriented programs for children, and school-classes, which is fair enough

15 On this controversial issue see Tamara Jones. "Living History of Undying Racism: Colonial Williamsburg 'Slave Auction' Draws Protest, Support." *African Diaspora Archaeology Newsletter*. 1.3 (1994): 1-3; Scott Magelssen. "Making History in the Second Person: Post-touristic Considerations for Living History Interpretation." *Theatre Journal* 58.2 (2006): 291-312; Scott Magelssen. *Living History Museums: Undoing History Through Performance* (Lanham MD: Scarecrow, 2007); Jason Stupp. "Slavery and the Theatre of History: Ritual Performance on the Auction Block." *Theatre Journal* 63.1 (2011): 61-84.

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considering the limited budgets, and the reluctance on the side of the museums to engage in political education. Consequently, programs engaging children in activities like painting with self-prepared colors, writing with quill and ink, or early medieval agriculture, flourish in Roman sites like Xanten and monasteries like Lorsch, but without conveying much of an insight into the political positions of the few who learned to read and write in, for instance, the Carolingian empire. The fear of propagating political messages via theatrical spectacle will also likely prevent the adoption of Williamsburg-like programs in one of the sites best-suited for the purpose, the Frankfurt Paulskirche, where the first national assembly of democratically elected delegates congregated in May of 1848. Not that political theater in German museums were without precedent altogether, though: It was another 1848 commemoration that experimented with hired actors for the 150th anniversary of the failed revolution in Baden in Karlsruhe in the summer of 1998.[16] The audience response was favorable enough, but the experiment ended when the exhibition closed, and has at least to my knowledge not been repeated elsewhere.

Living History in Schools

There is a slow but steady increase in the use of living history interpretation in both US and German schools. Which is somewhat surprising, since schools do not usually have a concrete local or chronotopical connection to whichever episode from history is supposed to be presented, and the theory of living history so far has been one of enlivening sites, rather than operating on its own. Reenactments, too, try to recreate "period" environments – if the original site of the medieval battle is now a supermarket parking lot, the reenactment moves to a mimicry site that will accommodate the karaoke battle.

The limits lie elsewhere. For one, it is difficult to establish anything approaching even the limited credibility of a re-enacted situation in a typical German or American school classroom. The problem is partly contained in what Samuel Taylor Coleridge called "the willing suspension of disbelief" – but that referred to the comparatively substantial illusionist capacities of the theater. Transforming a school classroom into a living history situation needs more effort, and not necessarily in the physical sense. The direction a living history classroom needs to take

16 Wolfgang G. Schmidt and Babette Steinkühler. "Schauspieler zeigen die Revolution 1848/49," in *Inszenierte Geschichte(n)*, ed. by Badisches Landesmuseum, Andrea Altenburg (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1999), 67-83.

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is the one Stephan Packard has called *inventibility*.[17] Which refers to the capacity of, for instance, children, to combine figurines from Star Trek, medieval knights, and cowboys & Indians to new game arrangements. Inventibility is visible in A. A. Milne's *Pooh Bear* stories, and in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*. Inventibility steers the imaginative (rather than the fantastic) away from the conventional.

Secondly, there are few if any training programs for interpreters, at least in mainland European countries. There has been a *National Association for Interpretation* in the US since 1988, with official training and certification programs, but of course not everybody who volunteers for a school program is a certified interpreter. There are numerous instances of reenactors just bringing and showing their gear, though the presence of even reenactors' guns is no longer encouraged by many American schools in the wake of recent school shootings. For the sake of "authenticity", a number of programs have therefore been abandoned. There have been few attempts at training teachers in the fine art of living history.[18]

Thirdly, while the use of drama and theater for teaching purposes is gaining ground in both the North American and German school systems, it is not always the same thing everywhere. It is true that as theatrical methods are adapted for classroom purposes, more and more subjects are becoming involved. What started as reading and interpreting drama in language and literature classrooms respectively has by now reached biology, and even mathematics.[19] Yet while the beneficial effects of theater as a didactic method are generally acknowledged, teaching history through theater does not necessarily meet with unanimous approval, even from those who gathered at least experimental experience. Reservations are brought forward for a variety of reasons, two of which I already mentioned: doubts about the qualification of living historians/reenactors in the classroom, and the allegedly questionable relation of history taught through theater to what is considered a proper approach according to school history textbooks.[20] The other critical categories are the overidentification of theater as a medium with predominantly aesthetic focus, and the tendency in the didactics of history, if they actually use living history as a

17 Stephan Packard. "The Inventibility of Other Audiences: Thoughts on the Popular Ideology of Fiction in Transnational Comic Books, on the Occasion of Captain Marvel #1." *IJOCA. International Journal of Comic Art* 20.1 (2018): 65-81.

18 The author conducted a class on "History Theatre" in the Summer of 2018 at ALU Freiburg. A different course was taken by Vicky Middleswarth. "History and Hardtack: A Museum Workshop Program for Kentucky Teachers." *Journal of American Culture* 12.2 (1989): 87-92. – This workshop had teachers outfitted and living in a reenactment setting. See also Julie A. Taylor. "Teaching African American History Through Museum Theatre." *The Councilor: A Journal of the Social Studies* 72.1 (2011): 1-11.

19 Martin Kramer. *Schule ist Theater. Theatrale Methoden als Grundlage des Unterrichtens* (Hohengehren: Schneider, 2013).

20 Elisabeth Hank. "Spiel im Geschichtsunterricht." *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 42.4 (1991): 355-368.

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method, to re-stage ceremonies and rituals.[21] This is possibly done to avoid personalizing, but of course ceremony and ritual follow rules that not only greatly differ from everyday life but rely on a code of signs and signals that is difficult to understand and fathom. Accordingly, some critics have noted that simple applications of role-play to what must have been rather complex scenarios even to contemporaries led to rather uneven results and even failure[22] – not too difficult to imagine if the available roles and models are taken from collections like Hohmann.[23]

One model format that has in the past successfully brought together teachers, students, and living historians, was developed by the Southwest German *Geschichtstheatergesellschaft* in the wake of the 150th anniversary celebrations of the revolutions of 1848/49. The – intentional – aim was to draw attention to the fact that with the defeat at Rastatt and internment in Switzerland, the revolution maybe failed, but that it did not end. Most of the republican forces escaped to Switzerland, from where they dispersed to other countries. Many of those refugees later fought for the Union and against slavery in the American Civil War – which they helped win. Given the rather bleak image of German history of the first half of the twentieth century as a role model for students, *The Second Fight for Liberty,* as former Prussian officer and Forty-Eighter refugee Friedrich Anneke called a small book he published in 1861, holds a considerable appeal. With this in mind, the troupe performed a stage show of the same title on a variety of occasions, flanked by both popular and scholarly lectures, articles and radio interviews for local, regional, and national media, and a volume of essays. The effects were unanimously positive: even where students did not go along with the show, or professed to be interested only marginally, they admitted that they took home the message that here was something positive to report. That Germans successfully fought for liberty and human rights, even though the fighting had taken place in another country, was generally seen as encouraging.

The didactic innovation that resulted in a rethinking of educational strategies came about more or less accidentally. Preparing for the show at a school following a history workshop, it turned out that most of the troupe would not make it, and that the rest were scheduled to arrive only shortly before the scheduled presenta-

21 Tim Neu. "Vom Nachstellen zum Nacherleben: Vormoderne Ritualität im Geschichtsunterricht," in *Echte Geschichte. Authentizitätsfiktionen in populären Geschichtskulturen*, ed. by Eva Ulrike Pirker, Mark Rüdiger, Christa Klein, Thorsten Leiendecker, Carolyn Oesterle, Miriam Sénécheau, and Michiko Uike-Bormann (Bielefeld: transcript, 2010), 61-73.

22 Klaus-Ulrich Meier. "Rollenspiel," in *Handbuch Methoden im Geschichtsunterricht*, ed. by Ulrich Mayer, Hans-Jürgen Pandel, and Gerhard Schneider (Schwalbach: Wochenschau, 2007), 325-341. Brigitte Dehne. "Wie komme ich zum Rollenspiel? Ein Bericht aus der zweiten Ausbildungsphase." *Geschichte Lernen* 23 (1991): 92-95.

23 Franz Hohmann. *Kurze Szenen und Rollenspiele für den Geschichtsunterricht* (Bamberg: C.C. Buchner, 2008).

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tion. We ended up improvising with volunteers from the ranks of the students, trying out costumes, poses and texts. The effect was a reenactment version of Bertolt Brecht's concept of the "learning-play", *Lehrstücktheater,* with the students learning by acting out rather than witnessing specific situations – finding out what it does to a person to be forced into a subservient position, being pursued through a room by police, being issued a uniform and a rifle, and so on.

There were two factors setting this workshop and the staged event apart from Brecht, and from the show as it had been performed before. The major difference from the potentially Brechtian experience during a reenactment was the lack of immersion in the experience preceding and enabling the learning-play level of reflection[24]. The other was the mixing of students and group members. Most of the scenes are tabloid, forming up to, or breaking out of, a tableau stasis. Also, several of the scenes in the show are not ceremonial but allegorical in nature rather than even attempting to approximate real-life experiences. The students had gone along, even though we noticed that some were smiling at what to them must have looked like vaguely ridiculous pathos and were occasionally exchanging glances among themselves. This – entirely understandable – attitude changed quite literally dramatically the moment the other members of our group arrived. They had already dressed up, simply walked onto the stage in their grimy and well-worn campaign gear, and fell into positions they figured were adequate for the partly allegorical "Defense of the Republic" tableau (see Fig. 6). What students told us afterwards in the informal debriefing was that this had been a moment of shock and recognition. "And then it was like these guys had walked right out of history and joined us up here, and suddenly we were part of that history."

24 Wolfgang Hochbruck. "Between 'Living History' and Pageantry: Historical Reenactments in American Culture," in *Beyond the Mainstream* [Contemporary Drama in English 4], ed. by Peter-Paul Schnierer (Trier: wvt, 1997), 93-105.

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Fig. 6: Allegorical Tableau "Defense of the Republic" (© Wolfgang Hochbruck).

This is obviously not quite Brechtian, since it worked with identification rather than reflection to achieve the sudden insight, but capturing the effect in the discussion afterwards, and making the students not passive recipients of a message, but a part of an engaging and activating process, turned the performance into a consciousness-changing moment. Or so we hope.

Conclusion

Living history can work as an educational tool above and beyond its entertainment value. Especially where there is no memorial space for the events – no museum, no monuments, not even historic sites, as in the case of the Germans fighting in the American Civil War - reenactment formats adapted to the conditions of school and classroom can provide alternatives. The only precondition being that the fact that any and all forms of living history theater constitute forms of intentional historiography is acknowledged by performers, dramaturgy, and directors,

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and duly reflected as programs are outlined, developed, and performed.[25] Living history programs in museums work through the congruency of site, costume, and activity. Staying "in character" should not be used extensively – at the most, a mixture of presentation "as if" and "about" will be effective.

There is ultimately no way beyond the ironic distance, even though participants and visitors might think there is, and talk about it. The famous "period rush" or "history flash" that some reenactors crave is a curious phenomenon, but ultimately a moment of re-cognition which relates to the original cognition like the reenacted battle to the original one – ironically, and in all likelihood triggered by previous (filmic) viewing experiences.

In the classroom, bringing in history in the form of a costumed interpreter can have the same effect – momentous immersion balanced off against the distanced position of the information resource. The insights and the historical comprehension competencies are left for the visitors *and* the students to work out for themselves in either situation. This, in turn, is what learning is all about.

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25 Wolfgang Hochbruck. "Geschichte dramatisch nachbessern? Wissenschaftlicher Anspruch und Performativität im Museumstheater," in *Vermittlung von Vergangenheit. Gelebte Geschichte als Dialog von Wissenschaft, Darstellung und Rezeption*, ed. by Mitja Horlemann and Tobias Espinosa (Weinstadt: Bernard Albert Greiner, 2011), 77-87.

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Stephanie Johns

Theatre, Education, and Public History: Teaching History at the Stratford Festival

This article will explore the various ways in which the Stratford Festival and its Education Department create spaces for discovery and learning through the plays performed each season and the programming the Education Department creates and connects to those plays. In order to understand how the Stratford Festival is able to accomplish this, a brief history of the Stratford Festival and its humble beginnings will lead into the exploration of the various programs offered. This will lay the groundwork to explore the Stratford Festival's method of engaging those of all ages in learning through drama and the importance and effectiveness of teaching history through theatre.

An interview with Luisa Appolloni, Education Associate (Enrichment Focus), distilled how I feel about history education: "Dramatizing historical events offers us a glimpse into our humanity. It removes the impersonality of dates and times, giving us a much more personal experience."[1] Teaching history through drama is a powerful and distinct way of sharing a particular aspect of history with a broader audience. Public history allows historians to widen their educational net to allow more people to engage with history in a less threatening or overwhelming way. An audience member does not need a history degree to understand the relationships, the feelings, or emotions portrayed on stage. They are entering a space where they will collectively understand and feel emotions with a group of people that they will never experience something with in the same way again. As a teacher of history, theatre is dynamic and allows for a more fluid exchange of understanding, rather than statically reading a book or listening to a podcast and passively allowing facts to enter one's brain. An audience member will absorb and process the action on stage as well as the experiences of those around them in the theatre. They may hear gasps, audible words, or they may hear nothing at all. These sounds are clues to the audience members as to what they are experiencing or understanding as a community. These sounds are also cues for the actors on stage, allowing them to enhance a certain moment if they can tell that this particular audience understands the information they are receiving, or it is a chance for the actors to switch gears because the audience is not grasping the gravity of the situation that is developing on stage.

1 Luisa Appolloni, Education Associate (Enrichment Focus), interview with author, March 27, 2019.

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A Brief History of the Stratford Festival and our Philosophy

> I do not consider that going to Canada to play in a theatre-in-the-round not yet built, in a town of 18,000, in a program quite impossible to present commercially in the west end, is entirely unadventurous. The possibilities of disaster are quite formidable![2]
>
> Alec Guinness, 1953

In 1953, the Stratford Shakespearean Festival began in a tent on the same grounds that the current theatre building stands on today. The town of Stratford, Ontario needed a business that was going to be profitable in the years following the Second World War. It was odd that they chose a theatre as the most profitable option for the area since, as most people know, the arts are not the most lucrative business option. Nevertheless, the Stratford Festival was able to forge ahead and bring well-known British actors to Canada to perform Shakespeare's plays. There are still patrons today who attended productions in the original tent sixty-six years ago.

The Stratford Festival opened its first season on 13 July 1953 with a production of Shakespeare's *Richard III*, with British actor Alec Guinness at the helm.[3] The Stratford Festival's focus was, and still is, classical theatre, including Shakespeare's canon of thirty-seven plays.[4] The more popular Shakespeare plays, including *Hamlet*, *Romeo & Juliet,* and *A Midsummer Night's Dream* are rotated on approximately a five year basis, while the lesser-known Shakespeare plays are rotated on a more sporadic basis. These more obscure plays are chosen based on a variety of factors, including the actors returning next season, directors that may have an interesting take on a specific play, and the current political and social climate we live in. Typically, the more popular Shakespeare plays are taught in elementary and secondary schools, and featuring these plays regularly enables students to attend live productions of the plays they are studying. In Southwestern Ontario, a high school English class trip to Stratford to see a Shakespeare play is a common memory among people of all ages. My high school English teacher included a trip to Stratford every year in his English curriculum; when we engaged with the material, we were up on our feet exploring the text in our classroom.

The Stratford Festival produces twelve to fourteen plays each season and is able to create those worlds with the help of highly skilled artisans. From wig making,

2 Adelaide Leitch. *Floodtides of Fortune: The Story of Stratford* (Stratford: The Corporation of the City of Stratford, 1980), 193.

3 The Stratford Festival. "Our Timeline," URL: https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/AboutUs/OurHistory/Timeline (accessed March 15, 2019).

4 Thirty-seven plays is widely accepted as the number of plays Shakespeare wrote during his lifetime. Research exists that poses discrepancies ranging from 36 to more than 40 plays but for our purposes, I will not be delving into the origins of Shakespeare's plays. This is simply a reference point to explain the artistic focus of the Stratford Festival.

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millinery, costume design, dyeing, and sewing, to set building, scenic painting, and much more, the Stratford Festival can do it all. At the height of the season, there are over one thousand employees working to make the theatre a success. As a full-time employee, I work year-round preparing for the upcoming season whilst running the current season's programming. We are always thinking one or two years in advance to ensure we have the resources to accommodate our choices for upcoming seasons. However, we also have to be adaptable in order to program plays that are relevant to the current local, national and global political climate. Art and theatre are nothing if they are not a commentary on the human condition and political world, so we need to ensure that what we are presenting on our stages for our audiences is a reflection of what they may be experiencing in real life or seeing every day on the news.

Since we are a repertory theatre, we also have the opportunity to produce contemporary plays, musicals, and brand new plays.[5] The 2018 season was a great example of this, as we produced two brand new plays: *Paradise Lost*, an adaptation of the Milton poem by playwright Erin Shields, and *Brontë: The World Without*, based on the lives of the Brontë sisters by playwright Jordi Mand. In 2018, we produced four Shakespeare plays, including *The Tempest*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *Coriolanus*, and *Julius Caesar*. These plays all relate to the overarching theme of Free Will. In the press release for the 2018 season announcement, the Artistic Director Antoni Cimolino wrote:

> We long for liberty, - but with it comes a heavy burden of responsibility. Often we agonize over making tough decisions. Occasionally we try to force our wills on others. Too seldom do we take responsibility for our actions. And there's a fascinating paradox at the heart of this theme. When Christopher Hitchens was asked if he believed in free will, he replied: 'I have no choice.'[6]

Mr. Cimolino's quotation relates to our current political climate in the US and Canada, and connects on many levels with every play we produced in 2018, in particular *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Pulitzer-prize winning novelist Harper Lee. Director Nigel Shawn Williams directed the adaptation dramatized by Christopher Segel. Every character in the play makes a choice about whether or not to believe Mayella Ewell's accusations against Tom Robinson, but the only people

5 A repertory theatre is a theatre that produces more than one play at a time with the same, or some of the same, actors performing in multiple plays. Typically, an actor is cast in two early openers that rehearse at the same time up until opening week, and then while they are performing the first two shows, they will rehearse for their late opener that will open in August. From August until the end of the season, these actors will perform in three different productions. This is true at the Stratford Festival, but not all repertory theatres operate in this manner.

6 The Stratford Festival. "2018 Media Release," URL: https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/Media/News-Releases/2017-08-22/2018-playbill (accessed March 15, 2019).

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who truly have free will in the story are the white, educated adults. Even Atticus Finch, the so-called hero, is stuck between doing what he feels is right as Tom Robinson's lawyer and what the community he lives in believes he should do. In the 2018 production, Atticus Finch's young daughter, Scout, is central to the play. The audience is seeing and hearing what Scout remembers, since this adaptation uses the adult Scout as a narrator who drops in on moments from her past. The Reference Guide for Teachers includes the following passage:

> Author Harper Lee set her novel at a time of intensifying class and racial tensions in the United States. During the Great Depression, the failing economy hit the South very hard, and the black population, already poor, felt the effects more than anyone. Segregation was normal, as were hunger, unemployment and deprivation. Organizations such as the racist Ku Klux Klan had enormous influence on both local politics and the consequences of judicial procedures. Mob justice – including lynching – was frequent and vicious.[7]

The low social status of the Southern black population during this time period is directly related to the end of slavery and the introduction of the Jim Crow laws, whose influence can be seen today in the news when another young black man minding his own business is shot and killed because a white person felt uncomfortable.[8] Both the play and the novel are often criticized for placing Atticus, the white lawyer, on a pedestal as the savior for the black characters in the story. The director of the 2018 production was Nigel Shawn Williams, who is of Jamaican and Canadian descent. Having a black director able to direct this story, acknowledge the shortcomings of the story itself, and then find ways to address the shortcomings with strong responses in the silences of the production is immensely powerful to watch on stage. The free will of the characters in this story is constantly challenged through questions from young Scout, cross-examination in the court scenes, and the retelling of what happened on the night that Tom Robinson allegedly sexually assaulted Mayella Ewell.

7 Stratford Festival. "About the play, Stratford Short To Kill a Mockingbird," URL: https://cdscloud.stratfordfestival.ca/uploadedFiles/Learn/Teachers/Teaching_Resources/Content/9415%20-%202017%20Stratford%20Shorts-MKB.pdf (accessed June 1, 2018).

8 Jim Crow laws encompass any laws that were enacted to enforce racial segregation in the American South between the end of the Reconstruction era and the beginning of the civil rights movement in the 1950s. The term "separate but equal" is used to describe these laws despite the stark inequality of the facilities provided for whites and blacks. For more information: See Constitutional Rights Foundation. "A Brief History of Jim Crow," URL: http://www.crf-usa.org/black-history-month/a-brief-history-of-jim-crow (accessed September 10, 2019).

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The Education Department

The Education department consists of five people. The team consists of three certified teachers, an administrator, and a teaching artist and practitioner. We provide varied programming that targets audiences young and old throughout the season and into the winter months. In the next section, I am going to focus on the specific programs that we use to teach history through theatre.

First, we offer post-show chats with our artists following performances. These events allow people of all ages to meet in a small group setting with the actors that brought the story to life on stage. The chats last for thirty minutes and are available for anyone to add onto their trip. Post-show chats give the patrons an opportunity to ask questions that immediately came to mind while watching the play, rather than writing to the actor on social media or in an email. For example, these chats are safe spaces for students to ask questions that they may have been too nervous to ask their teachers. They are able to find out behind the scenes information about the rehearsal process of a piece of theatre that deals with distressing and/or complicated history, and how the people in the rehearsal room were able to support each other through rehearsals and performances. These post-show chats also provide the opportunity for students who may not have seen themselves on stage or in movies before to talk with the actors about how it feels to be represented as an artist. These chats can be incredibly fulfilling experiences that may or may not relate directly with the play they are seeing. Post-show chats inspire, engage, and encourage students and adults alike each time they participate in this type of programming.

We offer workshops on site and in schools for elementary and secondary students. These workshops can be on any topic, but when it comes to teaching and exploring difficult subject matter such as the Holocaust and the lasting effects of slavery and segregation in the southern United States, it is important to provide students with the chance to ask questions, to uncover difficult answers, and to explore source material before the students are exposed to a theatrical production on the topic. Preparing youth to see difficult situations on stage is integral to that student understanding. No student should feel like they are being bombarded with images, themes, or topics that they were not prepared for or warned about in advance. Students typically respond to things they do not understand with laughter, even if they know what they are seeing is not funny. When we are able to help prepare the students with background information and an understanding of what they are about to see, students are able to let down their metaphorical armour and feel comfortable watching the play with their peers, thus minimizing awkward laughter during death scenes and similar moments. Wanting to make students comfortable and prepared to see something that may be shocking is not the same as wanting them to only be exposed to happy plays with obvious moral

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lessons. Students *should* feel uncomfortable when confronted with how people have been treated in the past because of their background, race, religion, sex, age, and disability. The uncomfortable moments are the moments where the most interesting and challenging questions and thoughts emerge. That lack of comfort can push those students to make change in their school, home, community and wider world in the future.

The Education department also offers two teacher professional development programs in the summer, the Teaching Shakespeare Program (TSP) and the Teaching Musical Theatre Program (TMTP). These programs immerse teachers in two days of focused study on the Shakespeare plays or musicals that are on the current playbill. Teachers learn how the themes and motifs are relevant to today's students and satisfy curriculum connections from the Ontario education system. Both Shakespeare and Musical Theatre can be used to teach complicated stories. From *The Merchant of Venice* and *Julius Caesar* to *Hamilton* and *South Pacific*, each play and musical presents themes that students and teachers can begin to unpack together before, during, and after seeing a production. When it comes to teaching history, theatre is not static (like a printed book). It is fluid and changes depending on the production and the actors chosen to embody the characters. Theatre provides a lens through which to explore race relations, government overthrows, the history of different countries, the idea of the "other," revenge, intolerance, love, and relationships. During the TSP and TMTP, teachers are challenged and questioned through participation in exercises that take the text of the plays off the page and get the teachers on their feet and speaking the text. Teachers cannot expect to ask their students to take risks, like speaking in iambic pentameter in front of their peers, if they themselves do not model the behavior first. Teachers work together in groups and independently to come to new understandings of pieces of theatre, come to a greater understanding of how their students may view the play or musical, and learn how to use the provided tools to ensure all of their students are supported in the study of the play or musical. Teachers have the opportunity to see the productions they are studying while participating in the professional development workshops, which prepares them to see the production with their students in the following months. It also provides them with a better understanding of the main ideas, themes, and motifs on which this particular production and creative team focused during the rehearsal process. This allows teachers to preview the performance and flag topics that they may need to explore more deeply with their students when they are teaching the play or musical in their classroom. In addition to the professional development workshops, teachers receive a teaching artist partner who visits their classroom before and after the class field trip to the Stratford Festival to see their chosen production. In these workshops, the teacher and artist collaborate to create lesson plans that challenge students to think critically and explore the story more deeply than studying the play or historical topic in

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isolation. They also receive a free Prologue before seeing the matinee performance of their chosen show.

The 2018 Prologue Series included all of the Shakespeare plays on our playbill and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The Education department selects the productions students are most likely to attend and will need the most context in order to engage with the material. Prologues are one-hour long workshops in one of our theatres, where up to five hundred students can engage with three actors and their peers before the play even begins. The Prologues take place on the stage where the play will be performed just three hours later, immediately allowing students to buy into the idea of seeing a performance that afternoon. Even if students are not particularly excited to see a play, they understand the incredible opportunity they have when asked to volunteer to read text on stage and work with real actors for a few minutes. Most of the actors in the company have never stepped foot on the Festival theatre stage until they are employed as an actor, so having this opportunity is unique. Select students are invited on stage to participate in exercises that relate to the characters, themes, and story of the play. Our Prologues include activities which engage up to 500 students at once and allow for individual reflection. A typical Prologue begins with welcoming the students to the space, a land acknowledgement, and a short physical and vocal warm-up, because most of the students have been travelling on a bus for over an hour.[9] Then the actors begin by asking the students a series of questions which relate directly or indirectly to the play they are going to see later that day. An actor might ask students to stand up if they have ever disagreed with their parents. This question directly links a student's world with those of the characters Romeo and Juliet, who went against their parents' wishes throughout Shakespeare's play. The actors will ask a few questions to get the students thinking about how theatre, regardless of your circumstances, can connect you with the characters or events in the play or to the other people experiencing the play with you in the audience. Next, the actors will gauge the audience's knowledge level. In most cases, the students know some information about the play they are going to see that afternoon. Their teachers may have started reading the play with them in class (or the students were asked to read a synopsis online), but often, the teachers have not prepared the students at all. This is why the Prologues are crucial to student understanding and behavior in the matinee. A student who has not been suitably prepared to see a live performance may behave inappropriately. Preparation in terms of theatre etiquette and the basic premise of the play is necessary for students to be fully engaged and open to what they are

9 A Land Acknowledgement is a formal statement that recognizes the unique and enduring relationship that exists between Indigenous Peoples and their traditional territories. Land Acknowledgements occur prior to Stratford Festival events and before events at other institutions in Canada. For more information visit: http://www.lspirg.org/knowtheland and https://www.sapiens.org/culture/land-acknowledgment/ (accessed March 15, 2019).

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going to see. Depending on the students' knowledge base, the actors will provide a brief synopsis, covering details that were not otherwise explored at their schools or at home. Then the actors will ask for volunteers to join them on stage to participate in drama activities directly related to the play. These participatory activities include the use of tableaux images to create a visual representation of a specific part of the story or pairing lines of text with the characters that speak them in the play. Following these activities, the actors ask the students a series of directed questions that relate to the play and the world that we live in. The actors work with the students in a very short amount of time to create a safe and open environment where students have the opportunity to share their opinion on a variety of subjects without fear of repercussions from their teachers or peers. During these directed question sessions, students provide incredible answers to hard-hitting questions about the society we live in and how the play they are seeing fits within it. Typically, students who were not comfortable getting up on stage to participate will provide answers during this time as they feel less vulnerable sitting amongst their peers. Once the group has had a chance to tackle the difficult questions, the students are invited to ask the actors questions about acting and working at the Stratford Festival. This is a very special time which solidifies the bond between the students and actors. During the afternoon matinee, students are better behaved and are enthralled while watching the performance. They become excited when they see their new actor friends on stage and always provide a massive standing ovation during the curtain call.

This type of theatre education changes children's lives through active discussions with their peers and empathizing with the characters they are going to see later in the matinee. During the Prologues, students are given a chance to speak and be heard. Sometimes students feel as though they have no voice in their classrooms or in their communities, which is why Prologues can be such a valuable experience for them. They arrive on our stages and explore the text or theme with actors in front of their peers and are able to make connections that were escaping them while studying the text on a page. Getting students up on their feet and using the text as a tool provides another way into the story. Students are often made to sit in their chairs and watch a video, then complete a true or false quiz. That type of learning is not engaging nor is it effective.

Prologues allow students to explore difficult topics that may be impossible to explore during regular class time. This could be due to differing abilities in their classroom or time constraints. The Prologue series workshops last for one hour, and in that time, students are able to learn from actors who have been living in the world of the play and from their peers. Students learn from each other's life experiences and learn how to make connections between what they are reading in their classrooms and what they are going to see depicted on stage. For example, in the *To Kill a Mockingbird* prologue, we discussed race, discrimination, misogyny,

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and sexual assault. Many teachers will not explore these topics with their students because of fear and not having the tools to talk about them in a meaningful way. Prologues do not only teach information about specific historical events, they also allow students to explore these topics separate from themselves – maybe they have been discriminated against or called the N-word by their peers, but they never had an outlet to talk about it. During the prologues for *To Kill a Mockingbird*, they are able to share (in a safe space) what they truly felt. Students were asked difficult questions and provided raw answers, which was unexpected early in the season. Students constantly surprised the Education team and actors by sharing their opinions with great depth, complexity, and clarity. Early on, I was not sure that the students would open up about personal experiences to a room of strangers, but as the season progressed, it became clear that students have voices and opinions on these difficult topics and need to be heard. The prologues were safe spaces for the students to finally share how they were feeling about our world. Every student who volunteered an answer was working toward changing the world as we know it, and they were happy to talk about what they were doing currently to achieve their goals and how they will continue to do so in the future.

Why is Historical Theatre Important?

Historical theatre provides a space for inquiry, understanding, exploration of themes in current and historical periods, and provides context for those students who have difficulty learning about abstract ideas and concepts in books and other mainstream educational mediums. Making connections is important when studying the past, and theatre based in the past or based on past events is crucial to helping students understand what came before them. Even if a piece of historical theatre is simply based on a true story, the piece can spark an interest in that historical era and cause a student to seek out more information. This promotes critical thinking about the piece and helps students navigate the true and imagined sections of a play through further research as part of an assignment or even personal interest on their own time.

Case Study 1: *To Kill a Mockingbird*

In the Prologues for *To Kill a Mockingbird*, elementary and secondary students were constantly challenged to think about their own situation and the situations of the people around them. Even if a particular student is Caucasian, it does not mean they cannot listen without judgement and think critically about the African-American experiences that are portrayed by the other students in the room and the actors on stage. "Taboos on the discussion of interracial issues eliminate

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valuable opportunities for expression and healing."[10] Dismissing talking about difficult subjects is counterproductive, which is why tackling these issues through drama and theatre can remove some of the gravity of the conversations and allow all to feel comfortable offering their thoughts and feelings.

The *To Kill a Mockingbird* Prologue consisted of the following activities: a vocal and physical warm-up, questioning the audience to gauge knowledge and to start exploring themes from the play by asking broad questions that are open for interpretation, such as "put your hand up if you believe children need to be shielded from learning about the injustices of the world" or "put your hand up if you believe racism is learned, therefore it can be unlearned."

Following the question and answer period, students were invited onstage to engage in drama activities that linked the world of the play to the characters. The first activity asked students to create tableau images to help understand three characters in the play: Tom Robinson, Scout Finch, and Boo Radley. Asking students to create images with their bodies opens their minds to think critically about the information they have been given and then apply their understanding to create a frozen image that translates to their peers in the audience. The actors were able to act as guides to direct the students to a particular focus, but the final images were student driven. Tableaux can also remove the anxiety of being required to act or perform in terms of speaking lines of text and provide a chance for everyone to participate in a performance without the use of voice, which can often be more powerful than adding words to the performance. Next, the students were asked if they were familiar with Jim Crow laws. More often than not, the students had heard of the term, but could not define it. An actor would then provide the students with a prepared explanation of the Jim Crow laws and their history. Then students would then be invited onstage again to participate in a matching activity. Using lines and situations from the play, students were asked to pair up the situation with a specific Jim Crow law that was enforced in the American South. This activity stimulated conversation and a tangible understanding of how the Jim Crow laws impacted the everyday life of black Americans. Next, we played a game that seemed pedestrian on the surface, but clearly demonstrated how privilege is often thought of as success or luck when in reality, privilege or lack of privilege is deeply rooted in someone's prior success. In this game, three teachers were asked to join the actors on stage. Each teacher was given an item: a ball, a stuffed squirrel, and an artificial flower. The teachers lined up side by side and tried to throw their item into a bucket held by one of the participating actors. Each person got their item into the bucket the first try. Then the person with the ball was asked to step closer to the bucket. The person with the squirrel was asked to take a small

10 Philip Seitz. "What happens when African Americans confront their past." *The Public Historian* 38.2 (2016): 14.

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step back and the person with the artificial flower was asked to take a step back and turn around. The teachers were asked again to toss their item into the bucket. As imagined, the teachers who were facing the bucket were still able to get their item into the bucket, while the teacher throwing the artificial flower was unable to do so. The students instantly understood why they were asked to play this simple yet effective game. It demonstrates how the privileges you are granted in life in terms of skills, location, socio-economic status, background, and beliefs play a role in how and if you will succeed. Then the actors asked the students questions and engaged in dialogue that would impress university professors. These (mostly) high school students from the United States and Canada were debating racism, discrimination, and how everyone needs to do better. The adults in the room have things to learn from the deeply-invested students they are lucky to be teaching.

In order to engage the students following the prologue, I introduced the *To Kill a Mockingbird* Engagement chalkboard. It consists of a chalkboard set up in the theatre lobby with chalkboard markers for patrons to use to answer the following question posed by the director Nigel Shawn Williams:

> The degradation of a human life is happening all around us. It's happening in our own neighborhoods. It happens in our schools, in our offices, in our grocery stores and on the busses. Sometimes it's loud, but most of the time it's silent. After the play, will anyone speak up when they witness discrimination? After the play, will more people stand up and speak up against racism, class discrimination and misogyny?[11]

I added "How are you going to change the world for the future?" to the end of the quotation to provide a call to action, to ask students to share their big ideas for the world we live in and to provide tangible opportunities for students to participate in pushing for change.

We then asked the students to turn to the person beside them and talk with them about the question. Then, myself or one of the actors asked the students to share their thoughts with the rest of the group – typically 20 hands shot up. We usually allow a few students to share their answers and then direct them to the chalkboard in the lobby. This pushes engagement into the lobby, where we hope conversations, brainstorming, and critical thinking continue with other students and patrons. We have had overwhelming participation in this part of the project, and I have been taking photos of the board after each prologue before erasing some to make more room for future patrons. Two great examples that came out of the engagement board are: "The same way Atticus did, he made the townspeople of Maycomb think! If we all encourage members of society to think and act on issues

11 The Stratford Festival. "To Kill a Mockingbird Study Guide," URL: https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/learn/studyguides/2018/to-kill-a-mockingbird-study-guide (accessed March 15, 2019).

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(currently) we can ultimately live in a better world!" and "Stop being passive in conversation when someone says something offensive. Change isn't polite!"

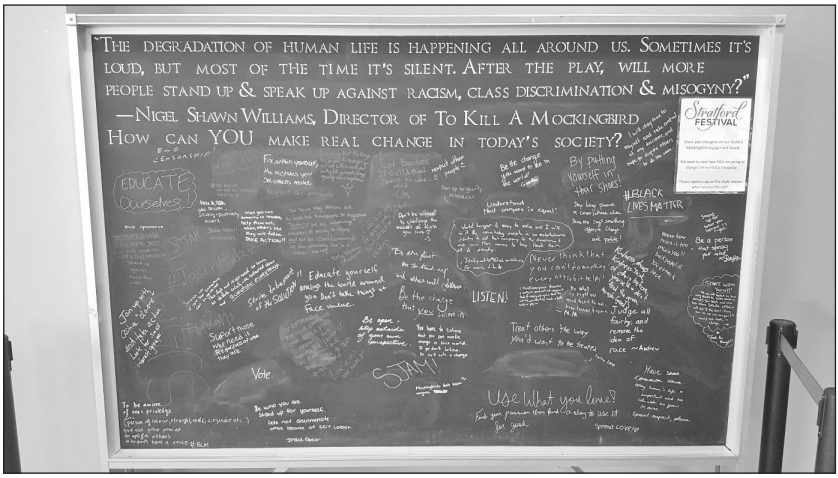

Fig. 7: *To Kill a Mockingbird* engagement board in the Festival Theatre lobby following a student Prologue workshop during the 2018 season (© Stephanie Johns).

Case Study 2: *The Diary of Anne Frank*

The Stratford Festival has produced two iterations of *The Diary of Anne Frank* throughout its 66-year history.[12] I will be focusing on the 2015 production, directed by Jillian Keiley. The Stratford Festival used the 1997 Wendy Kesselman adaptation of *The Diary of Anne Frank* for this production.

The 2015 production was performed at the Avon Theatre, one of the Stratford Festival's four theatres. This theatre boasts a proscenium arch stage, reminiscent of movie theatres from the early 1900s.[13] The 2015 season was my first season at the Stratford Festival, and because I started in May, I did not have the opportunity to contribute to the education materials that year. However, I was able to facilitate play-specific programming, including the Prologue series for *The Diary of Anne Frank*. We offered teacher professional development, post-show chats, workshops, Prologues, and various Forum events to expand our patrons' understanding and experience of the play itself. In addition to the work the Stratford Festival did, the Stratford Perth Museum was able to partner with the Anne Frank House in Am-

12 The Stratford Festival. "Stratford Festival Past Productions," URL: https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/AboutUs/OurHistory/PastProductions (accessed September 10, 2019).

13 A proscenium arch stage has an arch framing the opening between the stage itself and patron seating. It creates a sense of distance from the actors and the patrons and provides a very clear fourth wall between the two.

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sterdam to bring a travelling exhibit about Anne Frank to Stratford. The Montreal Holocaust Memorial Centre loaned artifacts to the Stratford Perth Museum to add to the patron experience.[14]

The 2015 production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* was a unique examination of the play, the story, and the history behind it. The lead actress Sara Farb[15] is a descendant of a Stutthof concentration camp survivor.[16] Director Jillian Keiley asked the cast to remember a specific event, thought, idea, and/or feeling they had when they were thirteen years old and at the beginning of each performance, the entire cast would come out on stage and stand in a line across the front facing the audience. This immediately broke down the ever-present fourth wall. Each cast member would tell the audience their name and the character they were playing and would then tell a story they remember from when they were thirteen years old, Anne's age was when she went into hiding in the Secret Annex. Some of the stories were funny, some of them were heartbreaking, but all of them resonated with the audience because their sharing immediately gave the audience permission to relate the themes, ideas, and hardships of the characters to their own lives. The actors had first been given that permission in the rehearsal hall, and later, in front of an auditorium of over 1,200 people, the patrons were included. These few minutes at the beginning of the play forced the audience to remember that Anne was a little girl with thoughts, feelings, and dreams, just like each person in the audience. Humanizing characters within a play is a true success of any stage production and should always be a central goal when producing one. Canadian theatre critic J. Kelly Nestruck reviewed the production, noting that "this prologue provokes laughter and tears, but most of all it forges an intense connection between the actors and the audience. An atmosphere of shared ritual is created – and makes the storytelling that follows incredibly powerful."[17] This shared ritual is exactly what theatre brings to the world of history and history education. How can we reminisce about something that happened in the past without a shared agreement on what happened? The introduction provided by the actors provides space for the audience to deeply engage with the material and erases the fear of being required

14 Laura Cudworth. "Stratford Perth Museum exhibit coincides with play," June 2, 2015, URL: https://lfpress.com/2015/06/02/stratford-perth-museum-exhibit-coincides-with-play/wcm/66538d0e-8e7d-beb3-f96d-57c938fa1a7c (accessed December 13, 2018).

15 About the Artists. "Sara Farb," URL: http://www.abouttheartists.com/artists/321022-sara-farb (accessed March 15, 2019).

16 J. Kelly Nestruck. "Stratford's Diary of Anne Frank is hard-hitting and deeply enriching," *The Globe & Mail*, May 29, 2015, URL: https://www.theglobeandmail.com/arts/theatre-and-performance/theatre-reviews/stratfords-diary-of-anne-frank-is-hard-hitting-and-deeply-enriching/article24699375/ (accessed March 24, 2019).

17 Nestruck. "Stratford's Diary of Anne Frank is hard-hitting and deeply enriching."

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to abide by theatre etiquette. This introduction graciously gave the audience the opportunity to feel without fear and to engage without repercussions.

The Stratford Festival runs the Meighan Forum, which consists of over 200 events throughout the season including lectures, panels, mock trials, workshops, play readings, and performances. In 2015, the Festival hosted a Forum event with Sara Farb and her grandmother, Helen Yermus, who shared her memories of the Stutthof concentration camp. The Canadian Jewish News interviewed Farb about the Meighan Forum event and reiterated, "it is important to expose everybody to as many survivors as possible."[18] As those survivors disappear, so does our collective memory of the Holocaust. It is crucial to give young and old the opportunity to hear firsthand accounts of the good and the bad that have occurred in human history. The Meighan Forum events are often livestreamed on the Stratford Festival YouTube and Facebook pages and archived for those unable to attend the event. Ensuring that the Stratford Festival is recording this type of history is essentially democratizing the past and sharing knowledge and experience with those who otherwise would not get the same opportunity. Allowing those near and far to engage, learn, and think critically about what has come before is the true meaning of public history.

In order to fully support teachers in their teaching of the book *The Diary of Anne Frank*, the Education Department held professional development days aimed at elementary and secondary teachers. Education Associate (Enrichment Focus) Luisa Appolloni discussed the reasons teachers choose other plays or books for their classrooms. "All too often teachers are hesitant to teach some of the more difficult subjects, such as the Holocaust, in part because they felt ill-prepared to do so and they fear that the issue, if not handled properly, may be too traumatic for some students."[19] The fear of not knowing enough can be crippling for many teachers who would rather avoid the subject than do the required heavy lifting to help their students understand the issues. Luisa goes on to explain how the Stratford Festival Education Department was able to address these worries: "To help ease their concerns, we provided them with background information resources and useful lesson plans to develop their awareness of social justice issues."[20] In addition to the professional development days, we offered *The Diary of Anne Frank* Prologue series, which allowed hundreds of students to connect with actors playing the difficult characters who they would see on stage that afternoon. Inviting the students into the conversation through activities on stage with real actors allowed the students to engage in the subject matter in a way that was impossible in their own

18 Jordan Adler. "Actress says playing Anne Frank is 'a rite of passage'," *The Canadian Jewish News,* May 24, 2015, URL: https://www.cjnews.com/culture/entertainment/actress-says-playing-anne-frank-rite-passage (accessed June 12, 2019).

19 Appolloni, interview with author.

20 Appolloni, interview with author.

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classroom. Students were able to hear how the actors grappled with the subject matter and how they still do not have all of the answers but are more informed than they were before rehearsals began. Teaching historical theatre is not a matter of being right, it is a matter of opening the patron's minds to other possibilities and viewpoints that the patron or student may not have previously considered.
During the Prologues for *The Diary of Anne Frank,* we included an activity where a number of students were handed different-colored cards. Then the students held onto them for the duration of the prologue. Once the prologue was nearing the end, the actors asked the students with cards to stand up. The standing students represented the people who were taken to concentration and death camps during the Second World War. This number directly related to how many students were actually in the prologue. This visual exercise was a reality check for the students and teachers alike.

Conclusion

We believe that theatre education is a vital part of a students' development. Through initiatives at the Stratford Festival, we believe we are changing student's lives through our educational programming, which we often pair with historically relevant plays. The Stratford Festival has been committed to offering students affordable tickets to our plays since the early days of its history. "In 1958, began the highly successful school performances, in spring and fall, with matinees at reduced prices and with a member of the cast coming back for questioning afterwards. The millionth student arrived October 9, 1977, to see *The Tempest*, was given a lifetime pass."[21]
We can use theatre to teach the past effectively as long as we engage students in meaningful ways and share in the experience. Without the engagement of actors, influential adults, and teachers, students will have a more difficult time buying into an exercise. Students will absorb more information and come up with questions when exposed to historical theatre than they will by simply reading a textbook or answering some true or false questions on a quiz. Students can learn facts and names of historical figures by learning about history through theatre, but they also learn about empathy and relationships. What they learn informs their own lives and how they approach relationships in the future. History cannot be taught in isolation if we want our students to grow into empathetic, caring, informed change-makers of the future. Krista McCracken discusses David Dean's article[22]

21 Leitch, *Floodtides of Fortune*, 202.
22 See David Dean. "Theatre: A Neglected Site of Public History?" *The Public Historian* 34.3 (2012): 21-39.

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on theatre as a neglected site of Public History and suggests that "[t]heatrical productions can be dynamic, emotional, and historically accurate means of engaging a larger audience."[23] Through my experience at the Stratford Festival as a patron and as an employee, I know this to be true. My experience as Education Coordinator, sharing in the learning experience with students from grade four to post-secondary, has been one that reinforces the strength and importance of historical theatre, and theatre in general, in forcing students to examine their beliefs, think about their actions critically, and begin to question the world around them. The proof is in every Prologue experience, where students and teachers leave reenergized and excited to see the play in the afternoon. The proof is when students enthusiastically throw their hands in the air to answer a challenging question offered by an actor at the end of a Prologue. It is shown when students and teachers post on social media about how the Education programming and the play itself have changed their perceptions and made them question their previous assumptions and ideas. Theatre can change lives and can teach complicated histories when it is paired with critical exploration in the classroom, led by the teacher and activities and programs provided by the Stratford Festival.

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Felix Apel

Hollywood's Influence on the Transmission of Historical Images: Lars Kraumes' *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer*

What is a *historical image*? To answer this question, educators sometimes like to conduct a simple thought experiment by asking students and other participants the following question: What did Cleopatra look like? Most respondents will certainly describe her with black, medium-length hair, fine facial features, wearing a lot of jewelry, and having a truly impressive and attractive appearance overall. However, the opposite is true: historians and archeologists know almost nothing about Cleopatra's appearance and character. How is it that the overwhelming majority of people think Cleopatra looks like this? The majority of popular ideas about Cleopatra stem from Elizabeth Taylor's portrayal in the 1963 film *Cleopatra*. These physical and character attributes from the film are part of her historical image, or rather part of a culturally-created historical image which is taken up by numerous recipients and passed down again and again through repeated confrontation.

This article is devoted to the creation and transmission of historical images and focuses on the medium of film, which has influenced the formation and mediation of these "notions of history." As a cinematic event, as a series, or in the documentary format, these images shape our notions of the historical past and its protagonists. First, this article will explain what is meant by the term historical image and how it develops through the mechanism of *historical imagination* and narration. Hollywood productions like *Cleopatra* make an essential contribution to the creation of historical images. The role and potential of the "Hollywood myth" in mediating historical images will be explored in this section. For this purpose, an overview of the economic prerequisites and stylistic design that underlie the success of Californian film productions is necessary.

Fritz Bauer's biography will be used to demonstrate to what extent individual elements of filmmaking influence the transmission of Fritz Bauer's historical image. Additionally, the mechanisms of historical imagination and the narration of historical images will be examined by using the 2015 feature film *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer (The People vs. Fritz Bauer)*.

In order to better illustrate the depicted events and analyze the historical film in question, I will also include few biographical notes on Bauer's life, as well information about the film's own context and place within the film landscape. My analysis

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will show that *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer* exemplifies how film is influenced by the mechanisms of historical imagination and stylistic narration.

Historical Images – Creation and Structure in Film and History

The development and definition of historical images is an interdisciplinary research field.[1] Karl-Ernst Jeismann's definition of historical images is the preferred characterization for academic historians and the related field of history didactics. He describes historical images as "a metaphor for established ideas and interpretations of the past with a deep temporal horizon to which a group of people ascribes validity."[2] With *imagination*, Jeismann understands the symbolization of historical facts and persons with the help of one or more cognitive processes. An example of this is the use of a person's historical imagination to create a performance while reading a historical text or watching a historical film. He emphasizes that a historical image is not so much a *concrete* inner idea as a collection of images that individuals and groups have of themselves and their past.[3] In his research, however, Jeismann makes it clear that individual imagination and the images developed from it play participative roles but do not reflect the core of the term *historical image*. Instead, Jeismann focuses on the collective ideas of a social group about its past. Historical images influence the historical consciousness of a group.[4] This means that a present identity is formed by ideas about the past; options for future actions are also derived from it.

In his dissertation *Geschichtsbilder und Spielfilme*, Andreas Sommer bemoans the lack of selectivity in the thematic field. He describes it as a "vague construct"[5] and thus indirectly refers to the unspecific and trivial definitions of the phenomenon.[6] The academic literature on the subject makes it clear that the genesis and

1 See Ulrike Kregel. *Bild und Gedächtnis. Das Bild als Merkzeichen und Projektionsfläche des Vergangenen* (Berlin: Kadmos, 2009), 31. See also a psychological approach by Gabriele Magull in Andreas Sommer. *Geschichtsbilder und Spielfilme - eine qualitative Studie zur Kohärenz zwischen Geschichtsbild und historischem Spielfilm bei Geschichtsstudierenden* (Münster: Lit, 2010).

2 Karl-Ernst Jeismann. "Geschichtsbilder, Zeitdeutung und Zukunftsperspektiven." *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 51/52 (2002): 13-22.

3 Sommer, "Geschichtsbilder," 80-81.

4 See Carlos Kölbl. "Geschichtsbewusstsein – Empirie," in *Handbuch Praxis des Geschichtsunterrichts*, Vol. 1, ed. by Michele Barricelli and Martin Lücke (Schwalbach: Wochenschau, 2012), 98-111; Karl-Ernst Jeismann. "Geschichtsbewusstsein – Theorie," in *Handbuch der Geschichtsdidaktik*, ed. by Klaus Bergmann, Klaus Fröhlich, and Annette Kuhn (Seelze-Velber: Kallemyer, 1997), 42-44.

5 Sommer, "Geschichtsbilder," 80-81.

6 Karl Dietrich Erdmann states that the construct is an exemplary "natural product of the elementary handling of history." Gerhard Schneider, who generalizes Jeismann's definition, believes that it is a matter of "total ideas of meaning, essence, course and goal of history."

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transmission of historical images are complex processes. It must be noted that historical images are individual constructions, which means that their development does not provide a pattern or method for scientific measurement. On the other hand, there are studies,[7] such as those by Andreas Sommer, which have empirically investigated the influence of "historical Blockbusters" on historical images and general ideas about the past and make this influence unmistakably clear. Two historical methods are plausible approaches for investigating the formation of historical images: historical imagination and narration.

Historical imagination is the ability to construct ideas. However, a distinction must be made between written media and films. For literature e.g., language is the basis and provides a broad spectrum of associations.[8] When reading, according to the literary scholar Wolfgang Iser, an automated, subconscious, mental, and cognitive process is at work which forms "a huge amount of optical and acoustic signals into living figures, meaningful structures, spaces for action and realities."[9] Furthermore, imagination makes it possible to integrate ideas and actions in context and into a narrative structure in order to give the action meaning.[10] This ability is immensely important to film, in which imagination's mode of action must be viewed in a differentiated way. Through its audiovisual mode of representation, a film provides ready-made images. As a rule, the viewer does not construct internal images, but captures and adapts the images of persons and actions seen in the film. In this case, the construction work lies with the producer, director, and actors rather than with the viewer. Vadim Oswalt classifies this sustainable storage as the "formative power"[11] of the image and emphasizes that "depiction often has a greater power than description [...]."[12] Due to this "superiority" of the image, it is understandable that the viewer's imaginative potentials play only a minor, or sometimes even no role when watching a film. Furthermore, critical reflection does not take place while viewing films or even afterwards. Schörken justifies this lack of reflection with the fact that the viewer's capacity for consciously perceiving and processing images is limited. The viewer concentrates on the "main plot" and ignores seemingly less important details, perceiving them subconsciously.

7 See Sommer, "Geschichtsbilder," 92–107. See also Sonja Czekaj. *Deutsche Geschichtsbilder – Filme reflektieren Geschichte. Modellierungen historischer (Dis-)Kontinuität in selbstreflexiven Non-Fiction Filmen* (Marburg: Schüren, 2011).

8 Vadim Oswalt. "Imagination im historischen Lernen," in *Handbuch Praxis des Geschichtsunterrichts, Bd.1*, ed. Michele Barricelli and Martin Lücke (Schwalbach 2012), 125.

9 Rolf Schörken. *Historische Imagination und Geschichtsdidaktik* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1994), 10-11.

10 See Schörken, *Historische Imagination*, 1994.

11 Oswalt, "Imagination," 126.

12 Oswalt, "Imagination," 126. – Here he refers "only" to the individual image, but prepares the basis for the reflections on film, which consists of continuous images.

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Narration, as the "structural feature of history,"[13] uses various mechanisms to ensure an audience's comprehension of a film and the mediation of historical images. In film and literature, for example, historical events are arranged chronologically to ensure that the viewer recognizes the causality of actions. Although it may seem simple, a story needs a beginning and an end that provide information about causes and consequences. If these causalities are not adhered to, it is likely that the viewer will not be able to classify or understand the presented historical information. Through the narrative order of historical statements with the help of prior knowledge and experiences, the viewer is able to put the actions and information presented into context and draw conclusions about their meaning.[14] "Referential models"[15] are used to improve perception. For example, in addition to the already-mentioned arrangement of beginning and end, historical schemata are used to divide the action into an exposure, a climax, and a resolution. This also includes the use of reference subjects, for example a historical personality who serves as the protagonist of a narrative. These models structure the historical narrative in order to give it meaning. Additionally, dramatic and literary archetypes are obligatory for feature film production in order to make the narrative interesting for viewers. Experience shows that popular archetypes such as the heroic epic, the founding myth, or the resurrection story help make films more appealing.

Hollywood's Role in the Development of Historical Images

The historical feature film has fundamentally influenced the representation and handling of history in the twentieth century. As "mediators between the past and the present,"[16] their continuous images shape our ideas and expectations for historical themes and characters. Blockbusters such as *Spartacus* (1960), *Schindler's List* (1993), *Gladiator* (2000), and *Der Untergang* (2004) have reached millions worldwide, sometimes triggered social debates, and have become an integral part of our culture of history and memory. Even though historical feature films—in the sense of artistic freedom—are not tied to facts and historical truth content, film producers try to suggest an illusion of these historical truths and to convey it in a "It-could-have-happened-this-way-method."[17] But with a strong power of

13 Michele Barricelli. "Narrativität," *Handbuch Praxis des Geschichtsunterrichts*, Vol. 1, ed. by Michele Barricelli and Martin Lücke (Schwalbach: Wochenschau, 2012), 255-280. 255.

14 Barricelli speaks here of a "synthesizing form of the organization of perception," Barricelli, "Narrativität," 258.

15 Barricelli, "Narrativität," 259-260.

16 Waltraud Wende. "Filme die Geschichte(n) erzählen," *Filmanalyse als Medienkulturanalyse (*Würzburg, Königshausen & Neumann, 2011), 11.

17 Wende, "Filme die Geschichte(n) erzählen," 16.

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suggestion and authentic depictions of historical persons and events, viewers and recipients can all too easily be convinced that what they have viewed is historical reality, which thus shapes their view of history.[18] The consolidation and transmission of historical images is also ensured by our popular approach to history. Exploring history has always been of interest to society, but consumer behavior has changed. At the beginning of the twentieth century, a visit to a cinema was still an extraordinary event for most people. Beginning in the 1950s, television established itself as the leading medium for conveying historical knowledge. The German historian Siegfried Quandt states: "The historical image of our society is largely a television image."[19]

Over the past ten years, the use of streaming services has increased steadily[20] and is an integral part of the lives of young generations.[21] Digital media has left television behind and taken on the status of a leading medium. Streaming services can access, filter, catalogue, and repeat feature films and documentaries at any time. For example, Netflix Germany has more than 20 films found under the keyword "Hitler" that are related to the dictator and the Second World War. Under the keyword "History", the range of numerous documentaries and feature films is hardly manageable. This development is the culmination of a trend that developed in Hollywood at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Hollywood is not only a district of Los Angeles, but also a synonym for the "dream factory" and Mecca of American film culture. This institution has made it its credo to transform the dreams of its consumers into reality with the help of fictional images. The production of films as entertainment established itself in the first half of the twentieth century. Above all, the socio-political and economic crises of the twentieth century promoted the desire for distraction and guaranteed an enormous sales market. Especially for the relatively young USA, Hollywood had become a key tool in the development of American identity and at the same time part of it. It supported the development of the identity-creating national myth of the "land of opportunity." Today, Hollywood itself is a "myth" which is unmistakably interwoven with American identity.

18 See survey by Sommer, "Geschichtsbilder," 2010, for example, history students are able to critically question films, but still allow themselves to be influenced by films when forming and transmitting historical images.

19 Siegfried Quandt. "Geschichte im Fernsehen. Perspektiven der Wissenschaft," in *Geschichte im Fernsehen: Ein Handbuch*, ed. by Guido Knopp and Siegfried Quandt. (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1988), 10-20. 18.

20 See Mathias Brandt. "Video-streaming in Deutschland," *Statista*, URL: https://de.statista.com/infografik/15940/video-streaming-in-deutschland/ (accessed March 25, 2019).

21 Britta Wehen. "Historische Spielfilm – Ein Instrument der Geschichtsvermittlung," *Bundeszentrale politische Bildung,* September 10, 2012, URL: http://www.bpb.de/gesellschaft/bildung/kulturelle-bildung/143799/historische-spielfilme?p=all (accessed March 25, 2019).

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The "dream factory" is more than one hundred years old. Hollywood has always managed to change under the pressure of political and economic circumstances in order to consolidate its supremacy. As early as the 1920s, its production facilities were so mature and advanced that films, now less burdened by time and monetary constraints, could be exported.[22] These developments were supported by the "oligopolistic structure" of the film industry, as production companies, film distributors, and cinemas were merged under one roof.[23] In 1914, fifty percent of the films distributed worldwide were produced in Hollywood.[24] In the 1950s, those responsible recognized the potential of television, just as they did in the 1980s for video, and today for the current development of streaming services. In the 1980s, through cooperation with European companies and other media groups, global conglomerates and communication groups developed, which restored the supremacy of Hollywood film productions and continue to promote them to this day.[25] These economic developments and structures have enabled the US film industry to exert a considerable influence on the global formation and transmission of historical images through feature films.

Californian production companies institutionalized the "classical Hollywood style" in 1917, which thereafter served as a guideline for the stylistic design of films.[26] Hollywood has promoted a wide range of technical developments for this purpose. These include, for example, the invention of zoom to provide different perspectives, or the "invisible cut" which can represent an uninterrupted action. Digital "special effects," which have been used since the 1970s, should also be mentioned.[27] Classical means of design such as props, costumes, and filming at authentic locations continue to be used to enable or suggest an authentic visualization of the past. Since the beginning of the twentieth century, directors and producers have used successful narrative patterns from theater and opera to tell

22 Jan-Christopher Horak. "Die Traumfabrik, Hollywood und seine Mythen," *Bundeszentrale politische Bildung*, October 10, 2008, URL: http://www.bpb.de/internationales/amerika/usa/10737/hollywood (accessed March 25, 2019).

23 For example, Loew's Metro, which was renamed Metro-Goldwyn-Meyer in 1924 and still exists today. See Horak, "Die Traumfabrik."

24 Andrea Gronemeyer, *Film – Schnellkurs* (Köln: DuMont, 2004), 41. – But even for the American judiciary, the supremacy of these corporations in the sense of monopolization was problematic. The "Paramount Consent Degree" passed in 1947 tried to counteract this and dealt a severe economic blow to the US film industry. The consequences were that production companies settled overseas, large studios were dismembered, and individual, temporary companies were founded for individual productions. See "The Paramount Consent Degree." *The United States Department of Justice*, URL: https://www.justice.gov/atr/paramount-decree-review (accessed March 25, 2019). See also, "Horak, "Die Traumfabrik."

25 Horak, "Die Traumfabrik."

26 Horak, "Die Traumfabrik."

27 For more on the technical foundations of success, see Burkhard Rövenkamp. *Schnellkurs Hollywood* (Köln: DuMont, 2003), 62-75.

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their stories.[28] The intention is to actively involve the audience as participants in the plot, which obscures the experience of film reception.[29] Recipients should not simply perceive the film but identify with the protagonists and "experience" the storyline. The main message of the "Hollywood code" is that genre has priority over all other design features of a film. This leads to a variety of consequences. On the one hand, Hollywood productions are standardized by recurring patterns in plot, staging, and actors typical of the genre, which increases a production's recognition value.[30] On the other hand, the "complex nature of reality"[31] is ignored in order to maintain focus on plot, production, and actors.

The popularity of American films and the Hollywood Myth is additionally supported by its star system. The image of actresses and actors is always a projection screen for a certain genre and influences the audience's identification with the characters. Especially during Hollywood's "Golden Age," between the 1940s and the 1970s, different genres had their specific stars. John Wayne mostly played the heroic and sacrificial cowboy or soldier, while Clark Gable predominantly appeared as a romantic lover. Katherine Hepburn and Cary Grant were the guarantors of success for comedies, as were Marilyn Monroe and Rita Hayworth as the femme fatale for dramas and film noir. In order to gain another moment of identification with non-American markets, Hollywood poached national stars from other countries and integrated them into the "dream factory." Marlene Dietrich from Germany and Ingrid Bergmann from Sweden are just two notable examples. The use of the "classical Hollywood style," coupled with economic structures and the popularity of stars, enabled American film producers to exert a significant influence on the spread of historical images for more than a century. Which historical images are presented and conveyed by a film and whether they are based on historically-proven facts is decided by the directors and producers, who are themselves shaped by their own historical ideas. The technical and narrative means of design make it possible to visualize impressive images and ideas, and convey them to a mass audience in a simple, target-group-oriented manner. In this way, the viewing habits of the recipients are stimulated, which not only facilitates ideas about the past, but also places the viewers directly into the narrative. The emotional experience of the story can literally be *overwhelming* and place reality in the background. Furthermore, the use of standardized design tools is responsible for the fact that Hollywood films have great identification and recognition value. They are primarily characterized by a low level of complexity in plot and staging. Viewers who consume films primarily for entertainment purposes find it easy to

28 Barricelli, "Narrativität," 255–280.
29 Horak, "Die Traumfabrik."
30 Horak, "Die Traumfabrik."
31 Horak, "Die Traumfabrik."

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comprehend the plot and motifs. This makes it easier to understand historical images and makes it easy to adapt these images. The star system has established itself as an identification structure for historical personalities. Using literary archetypes such as the heroic epic, actors and actresses such as John Wayne, Judy Garland, or Elizabeth Taylor developed into role models and objects of identification and idealization.

Fritz Bauer in Film and Television[32]

Over the past decade, Fritz Bauer has returned to the center of academic and public attention. The initial spark began with the two biographies written by Irmtrud Wojak (2009) and Ronen Steinke (2013).[33] On the other hand, German anniversary culture is also responsible for the Fritz Bauer renaissance. If, for example, Bauer's life (1903-1968) is compared with the dates of his legal achievements, especially the beginning and end of the first Auschwitz trials (1963-1965), the dates correlate with significant anniversaries which, as experience has shown, contribute to growing academic and public interest. Fritz Bauer had already been the main subject of documentaries that focused on legal investigations into Nazi crimes.[34] In 2009, Ilona Ziok produced *Fritz Bauer – Tod auf Raten*, which premiered at the Berlinale in 2010 and won numerous awards, as well as public interest. In 2013, Rolf Bickel expanded his earlier documentary work with the title *Auschwitz vor Gericht* and the *histotainment* collection by ZDF-History around the time Guido Knopp released (in his usual key) *Mörder unter uns – Fritz Bauers Kampf.*
At least three German feature films about Fritz Bauer have been produced. In 2014, the film *Im Labyrinth des Schweigens* appeared in German cinemas with Gert Voss as Bauer. This film portrays Bauer as the impetus behind the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, which comes very close to the historical truth. One year later, *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer* appeared with Burghardt Klausner in the title role. This film focuses on Bauer's involvement in the arrest of Adolf Eichmann, while a subplot focuses on his personality and sexual orientation. The resistance against Fritz Bauer from within the German judiciary and political system was portrayed

32 The following sections are based on: Felix Apel. *Fritz Bauer im Film - Die Tradierung seines Geschichtsbildes im Dokumentar- und Spielfilm*, Master's Thesis. Freie Universität, Berlin 2017.

33 Irmtrud Wojak. *Fritz Bauer* (München: Beck, 2009); Ronen Steinke. *Fritz Bauer – oder Auschwitz vor Gericht* (München: Piper, 2013).

34 In 1993, Rolf Bickel drew attention to Bauer's achievements with his documentary *Verdict on Auschwitz*. Filmmaker David Wittenberg produced the documentary *Die Würde eines jeden Menschen – Erinnerung an Fritz Bauer* in 1995.

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in both films, as well as in *Die Akte General* (2016), with Ulrich Noethen in the lead role.

Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer was produced by Thomas Kufus and publicly supported by various film funding institutions. Director Lars Kraume constructed a "scenic memory film," which on the one hand thematizes the hunt and seizure of Adolf Eichmann. On the other hand, Kraume focuses on a fictitious subplot that includes the handling of the "gay paragraph" (§175). The director and producer promise an "an exciting feature film [...] that tells the life (and the struggle) of a man on a well-researched historical basis" and "an emotionally gripping, timelessly inspiring heroic story."[35] It is therefore a "classic" historical feature film that attempts to find a balance between an entertaining and visual narrative. The director's intention is to tell the story of Fritz Bauer through historical research and also through the inclusion of a constructed archetype and exciting dramaturgy.

The film mostly received good reviews across the globe and won numerous international awards. At the German Film Awards, *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer* won in several categories, including Best Film. In the USA, and especially in Hollywood, the film was very well received with few exceptions. Kenneth Turan of the *LA Times*[36] pays tribute to Bauer's role as a successful Nazi hunter and his legacy, the Auschwitz trials of 1963. He praises Burghardt Klausner's acting achievement. Klausner, who had already worked with Tom Hanks in Hollywood productions such as *Bridge of Spies*, also received praise for his performance from Tom Keogh in the *Seattle Times*.[37] Keogh also praises director Lars Kraume for his atmospheric portrayal of the past, as well as his staging of Bauer, which shows that "not every moral hero looks like Captain America."[38] However, the subplot about Paragraph 175 was received negatively. Kraume portrays Bauer as a gay man in the film. In addition to historical experts and contemporary witnesses, Boyd van Hoeij of the

35 Thomas Kufus. Producer's Note "Die Heimatlosen," (in possession of author). – See also "Interview Lars Kraume," *Hefifilm*, URL: http://www.derstaatgegenfritzbauer.de/interviews.html (accessed April 4, 2017).

36 Kenneth Turan. "'The People vs. Fritz Bauer' brings a largely unknown Nazi hunter to light," *LA Times*, August 18, 2016, URL: https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/movies/la-et-mn-people-fritz-bauer-review-20160815-snap-story.html (accessed March 25, 2019).

37 Tom Keogh. "'The People vs. Fritz Bauer': a compelling Nazi hunt," *Seattle Times*, September 1, 2016, URL: https://www.seattletimes.com/entertainment/movies/the-people-vs-fritz-bauer-a-compelling-nazi-hunt/?utm_source=RSS&utm_medium=Referral&utm_campaign=RSS_movies (accessed September 18, 2019).

38 Keogh, "'The People vs. Fritz Bauer': a compelling Nazi hunt."

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Hollywood Reporter[39] also referred to the lack of historical proof for Bauer's homosexuality and criticized the invented, non-factual subplot.[40]

Fritz Bauer – from Jewish Remigrant to Hessian Attorney General

Before analyzing the film, a few biographical remarks are necessary to introduce the former Hessian Attorney General. Fritz Bauer was born to Jewish parents in Stuttgart in 1903, and was later forced into exile during the Second World War, and subsequently did not return to Germany until 1949. Even as a young attorney general in Braunschweig, Bauer succeeded with the 1952 Remer Trial, a milestone in German legal history.[41] In addition to rehabilitating the resistance fighters of 20 July 1944, Bauer succeeded in legally defining the Third Reich as an "unjust state." Although the judgments and results of the Nuremberg Trials of 1945–1949 were still considered legitimate and necessary by a majority of the German population, the mood changed when establishment figures such as doctors, civil servants, lawyers, and industrialists became the focus of investigations. As strong as the public desire was to condemn the Nazi political leadership, the acceptance of one's own complicity remained rare and manifested itself in the so-called *Schlussstrichmentalität* (drawing a line under the past) of German postwar society.

On 11 May 1960, Adolf Eichmann, the "organizer of the final solution," was kidnapped in Argentina by Mossad and flown to Israel, where he was publicly tried and executed in 1962. It was only after Bauer's death that it became known that he had made a decisive contribution as the Hessian Attorney General to tracking down and seizing Eichmann. It is certain that political reasons caused Bauer to remain silent, as former Nazi functionaries continued to occupy important positions in the West German judiciary and government. From this fact, his quote "When I leave my office, I enter enemy territory" may be understandable. Fritz Bauer is regarded as the "man in the background" of the Frankfurt Auschwitz trials, which

39 Boyd van Hoeij. "The People vs. Fritz Bauer ('Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer'): Locarno Review," *The Hollywood Reporter*, August 7, 2015, URL: https://www.hollywoodreporter.com/review/people-fritz-bauer-der-staat-813278 (accessed March 25, 2019).

40 For more on the debate about Bauer's alleged homosexuality, see Jan Thiessen. "Fritz Bauer – zur schwierigen Rezeption eines Lebenswerks," *Juristenzeitung* 70 (2015): 1069–1080; Erardo C. Rautenberg. "Die Bedeutung des Generalstaatsanwalts Dr. Fritz Bauer für die Auseinandersetzung mit dem NS-Unrecht," *Forschungsjournal Soziale Bewegung*, 28, (2015): 163–196; Steinke, *Fritz Bauer.*

41 During the trial, Bauer argued: "An unjust state like the Third Reich [was] not at all capable of high treason." For the Remer trial, see Norbert Frei. *Vergangenheitspolitik* (München: Beck, 1997), 347-351.

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caused a sensation in the Federal Republic of Germany in 1963 and are still the most extensive trials in German legal history; by the end of the trials, even the last skeptics could no longer deny the "inexplicable." Until his death, Fritz Bauer was a driving force behind the reappraisal of Nazi crimes. On 1 July 1968, Bauer was found dead in his bathtub. The circumstances of his death have never been fully clarified.

Analysis and Development of Historical Images in *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer*

The following section will explore how and to what extent the mechanisms of historical imagination and narration can influence the historical image of and about Fritz Bauer. To this end, two scenes from the film which clearly highlight both mechanisms will be examined.

(1) "There are rumors" – Fritz Bauer's death[42]

Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer begins with Bauer's driver entering the Attorney General's apartment and putting away his groceries. Several sequences show that Bauer has apparently fallen asleep in the bathtub. There is a nearly empty glass of wine and an open container with pills on the edge of the bathtub. Even after repeated calls from his driver, Bauer does not move and slides his head underwater. From outside the bathroom, his driver does not suspect that anything is wrong. However, when he leaves the apartment, he notices that the water is flowing out from under the bathroom door. He enters the bathroom and saves Bauer, who is then driven away in an ambulance (he lives). The following scene shows how detectives examine his apartment and BKA (Federal Criminal Police Office) employee, Paul Gebhardt, immediately informs senior prosecutor Ulrich Kreidler that the incident could be interpreted as a suicide attempt. Upon leaving the hospital, Bauer thanks his driver. In the following scene, Bauer replies to his employer, the Minister President, regarding a possible suicide attempt: "I have a pistol. If I want to kill myself, there won't be any rumors." Although this statement contradicts the possibility of a suicide attempt, the background and motives of the bathroom scene remain vague. A suicide attempt seems just as likely as an accident.

Director Lars Kraume tries to draw attention to the unexplained circumstances of the Attorney General's death and the negative effects of his profession on his physical and mental health. In terms of historical evidence, the filmmakers have changed the order of events. Fritz Bauer's death happened ten years after the capture and

42 *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer*, Lars Kraume, Dir. (Germany 2015), [TC 00:01:00 – 00:05:35].

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conviction of Adolf Eichmann. Therefore, the question of the interpretation and meaning of this reversed chronology comes to the fore. The changed order makes it clear right at the beginning that Bauer is in a poor mental and physical state, which could explain a suicide. It also becomes apparent that his (political) opponents have no reservations about exploiting the accident and his weakened position, such as Chief Public Prosecutor Kreidler and the BKA staff. During the rest of the film, this constellation enables the viewer to better understand Bauer's actions and considerations. The telephone conversation between BKA officer Gebhardt and the senior public prosecutor also clarifies that Bauer is in an elevated, professional position, and that Gebhardt and the senior public prosecutor act as narrators and contextualize the events and characters through their dialogue.

Dramatization of events is another narrative instrument. The dramatic music, rapid changes of images, and Bauer's sinking into the bathtub create tension that prompts the viewer to continue watching. It is precisely this staging of "near-death situation" that follows the archetype of the resurrection story. The circumstances of his situation drive him to his physical and psychological limits. He does not die, but recovers. It evokes an image of the "survivor," the "strong fighter for life," and the strong-willed Attorney General. In this case, the resurrection story archetype is closely linked to that of the hero archetype.

As previously mentioned, this mechanism is responsible for the fact that viewers can draw connections and conclusions regarding a possible suicide with the help of subconscious cognitive processes. The staged images, with the unconscious Bauer in the bathtub and the nearby wine glass and pills, construct a suicidal scenario. The conclusions presuppose that precisely this situation is known and recognized as such a scenario based on the viewer's life experiences. Likewise, the shots in between depict the rest of Bauer's apartment. The surrounding mountains of files give us the perception that Bauer is overworked, because he has let his work accumulate into his private life.

(2) "Eichmann was the central figure!"– Fritz Bauer to the Hessian Minister-President[43]

The second scene depicts Bauer's visit to the Hessian Minister President Georg August Zinn to inform him of his further actions. Shortly before, the Attorney General learned (via a letter from Lothar Hermann) that Adolf Eichmann was in Argentina. At the beginning of the scene, an insert makes it clear where the current scene is taking place: in the Minister President's office. A short time later, Bauer looks at a picture of Rosa Luxemburg hanging in the antechamber. After Zinn greets Bauer and addresses him by his first name, they both sit at the table. Bauer tells Zinn about his new knowledge of Eichmann's whereabouts and shows

43 *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer*, [TC 00:17:20 – 00:21:50].

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him the files he brought with him. Bauer also informs his employer that due to political and structural resistance, he is considering informing Mossad. Zinn notes the definition of treason if Bauer decides to take this step. Bauer then replies that the information and procedure must be kept secret. Nevertheless, the Minister President welcomes Bauer's commitment and says: "Your righteous anger is good. It keeps you young." Bauer answers with the following:

> No. I'm angry and powerless and it's making me old! What have I actually achieved? The officers who tried to kill Hitler are now no longer officially traitors, but apart from that, nothing. All our investigations have drawn a blank. You know, after '45 I really thought we'd conquered evil. I thought we'd be able to build a new society…free, just, fraternal. But people aren't interested in visions. They just want a nice little house and a nice little car. They want Adenauer's damned reconciliation! The restoration has defeated the revolution yet again here in Germany!

Zinn argues that in a few years, Germany will be ready to face its past. The scene ends with Bauer noticeably disappointed and his open question: "And what do you think I should write to Lothar Hermann in answer to his letter?"

This section of the film also illustrates why historical imagination and narration are important for dealing with historical images. The juxtaposition of Fritz Bauer with Rosa Luxemburg serves as an example.

Rosa Luxemburg's view of history is characterized by left wing political ideas and revolutionary concepts, as well as efforts to bring about lasting changes in society. If the viewer is familiar with Rosa Luxemburg, they will also know that Rosa Luxemburg was murdered because of these aspirations. The historical image of Luxemburg has a certain parallel to the motivations, achievements, and death of Fritz Bauer. By showing her image, the director wants to influence Fritz Bauer's historical image. Bauer's depiction suggests that he has a desire to change something within German society that corresponds to the extent of a social revolution – the reappraisal of Nazi crimes. In return, the director has a simple but effective form of design. He projects Bauer's reflection onto Rosa Luxemburg's portrait and places these two "revolutionaries" on the same level. Bauer's slight smile also indicates sympathy. From this context, it also shows that Bauer and the Minister President are friends and hold similar political views. Finally, the two protagonists' informal conversation points to this and confirms it when both sit at a roundtable and discuss the given circumstances at "eye level." The fact that a Minister President can represent left wing and revolutionary sympathies and views paints a picture of a Germany in which new and anti-fascist structures have emerged. As Minister President, Zinn represents the German state apparatus and paints a historical picture of a Germany that has changed after the Second World War. Additionally, the director draws on narrative elements which not only transmit Fritz Bauer's historical image, but also influence other historical images, especial-

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ly due to the monologue discussed above. Lothar Hermann's letter is the film's catalyst and, as already explained, an important stylistic element of the historical narrative. The monologue is the subsequent reaction to the letter. The dramatic arc and the following actions are rife with intentional dramatic tension. The audience, captivated by the authentic presentation, "sits at the table" with Bauer and Zinn. With his monologue, Bauer also sums up his achievements to date and contextualizes past and recent events. Not only does he remind us of basic structures and initial situations, he also explains the causes and reasons for his actions. As a direct narrator, he thus influences his own view of history. Additionally, his monologue refers to various historical images that were already seen in earlier scenes.

He speaks of "powerlessness," which refers to his "accident" in the bathroom, which once again symbolizes his physical and mental burdens. He admits to himself the great resistance he encountered when prosecuting the crimes of the Nazis and his associated inability to act. He also refers to the unwillingness of society to deal with the injustices of its past. In this respect, the focus is on the historical image of the German *Schlussstrichmentalität*. Nevertheless, in order to make it clear that it is possible to come to terms with the past, Bauer refers to his own success in making it possible for the resistance fighters of 20 July 1944 to no longer be referred to as traitors.

Bauer also mentions incomplete denazification. "The restoration has defeated the revolution yet again here in Germany!" In order to understand the context of this line, the viewer needs sound knowledge of German history and recourse to existing historical images. Bauer refers to the failed German Revolution of 1848, which espoused democratic rights and "freedom, equality, brotherhood." Thus, democratic values and human rights are also anchored in his historical image – values that he misses in his current environment. His statement on the "revolution" also completes the history and portrait of Rosa Luxemburg.

His argument about good and evil is also revealing. Bauer says "I really thought we'd conquered evil." By "evil," he means anti-democratic structures. As a narrator, Bauer builds up his previous struggle as a historical archetype: the "classic" struggle of good versus evil, which is supposed to influence the entire plot of the film. This "good vs. evil archetype" is once again the basis for making Bauer one of history's heroes.

Conclusion

The hunt and capture of Adolf Eichmann and the efforts to punish his crimes and those of his "comrades," are fundamental for Bauer's historical image in contemporary society. The production team of *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer* also portrayed many other episodes from the life of the Attorney General in the film. They de-

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picted his professional actions and challenges, as well as basic aspects of his personal life. In specific examples, this article has shown that the director used various mechanisms of imagination and narration and thus was able to create an authentic image of Bauer's history. Through imagination, the viewer can use memories and experiences, as well as his or her own historical images, to create new ones. Through connections of these aspects, viewers can see Bauer's suicide attempt with wine and pills, and they are also able to revise these initial thoughts because of his later explanations and excuses.

Furthermore, the mechanisms of historical narration can crucially contribute to the development and transmission of historical images. The decisive factor is not only what is being told, but also how and why. It is important however to keep in mind that a story, whether on film or in text, depends on creativity of its storytellers. The use of dramatizations, as well as comprehensible story structures like exposure, climax, and resolution for developing archetypes, eases the understanding of the protagonists' actions and motives. The historical film, especially the historical feature film, must often dramatize and add suspense to its story because of economic necessities and the will to entertain.

By comparing the design and representation strategies of *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer,* there are few differences with classic Hollywood productions. In recent decades, the development of national and international historical feature films outside of Hollywood has increasingly adapted to Hollywood conventions in terms of design and entertainment factors. However, globalization and the increasing cooperation between media and communication entities are certainly relevant. This is noticeable, for example, when American streaming services such as Netflix are able to simultaneously release American and German historical feature films all over the world. But classical cinema productions have also profited from this internationalization. Film premieres are no longer as staggered as they were fifty years ago. This development is not a one-way street; productions like *Der Staat gegen Fritz Bauer* also benefit from globalization and gain recognition not only in Germany but in Hollywood as well. In this respect, it is astonishing how smaller, national production companies have the potential to influence historical images in America.

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Thorsten Carstensen

Learning from John Ford: History, Geography, and Epic Storytelling in the Works of Peter Handke

Throughout his career, John Ford staged and narrated American history, generating groundbreaking and gripping films unsurpassed by any other Hollywood director or producer. The images he created have shaped conceptions of American ideals and rituals on both sides of the Atlantic. It was through John Ford's eyes that European cinema-goers in the 1960s and 1970s learned to watch and understand Abraham Lincoln, the vastness of the American West, and the young nation's ideological struggles and internal transformations. But for every viewer, now as then, going to the cinema is also always a process of individual appropriation. What John Ford has to teach about American history ultimately depends on one's own specific questions and interests.

The Austrian writer Peter Handke is among the best-known students of John Ford as an American history teacher. For nearly five decades, Ford's films have been a constant presence in Handke's writings. As I will show in this paper, key attributes of Ford's cinema – his earnest attention to human patterns of life, concentrated narration and perception, pathos of true feelings – can be clearly linked to Handke's own artistic pursuits. The most beautiful films, Handke once said in an interview, confront the viewer with the possibilities "of how one could live one's life." This, he continued, was particularly true of the "attentive, concentrated, pathos-laden films" of John Ford.[1] Thus, when asked by the organizers of the 2014 Viennale film festival to create a selection of his favorite movies, Handke made sure to include four classic Ford films in his list of 27. Titled "Peter Handke Goes to the Movies," the retrospective featured *Young Mr. Lincoln*, *How Green Was My Valley*, *The Quiet Man*, and *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance*.[2]

In his journal *Das Gewicht der Welt* (1977; *The Weight of the World*, 1984), Handke notes a maxim that can be applied to his general appropriation of literature, philosophy, visual culture, and even music. This maxim is particularly fitting with regard to his reception of John Ford: "Recapture and preserve [for your own life]

1 Heiko R. Blum. "Gespräch mit Peter Handke," [1970], in *Über Peter Handke,* ed. by Michael Scharang (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 81; my translation. – I would like to thank Sage Anderson for her invaluable help in translating quotes from Handke's works. All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

2 "'Für Momente gerührt': Handke im Kino," *Wien ORF*, URL: http://wien.orf.at/news/stories/2674250 (accessed August 10, 2019).

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the circumspectly beautiful life style of the older literature."[3] For Handke, Ford's films succeed in capturing these beautiful forms of the past that elevate us from what he sees as an oftentimes shapeless present. In Handke's ongoing criticism of artistic expression, Ford's cinema forms an antithesis to the type of seamless and thus inauthentic storytelling based on narrative "tricks" that he sees at work in contemporary American literature. While Handke objects to both Thomas Mann's literary irony and the rather academic narratives of French auteur cinema, he admires Ford's cheerful comedy. According to Handke, Ford's cinema allows the audience to experience the evolution of human relations "image for image and word for word"; upon exiting the cinema, the viewer thinks to himself, "I actually want to be or live like this."[4]

In Ford's mythical renderings of the American past, Handke's protagonists discover new possibilities of seeing and interacting with the world. Ford teaches Handke how to tell genuine stories that matter, stories about people trying to reconcile their own ideas and aspirations with those of the wider community and with historical forces that cannot be escaped.[5] Additionally, returning actors like Henry Fonda and James Stewart convey an ideal of gentle masculinity that blends calm, composure, willingness to act, and strength of character. Handke's exploration of the Fordian universe can be understood as an educational experience, or *Bildungserlebnis*, in the classic sense of the term. Watching Ford makes Handke aware of how he wants to write and what kind of man he wants to be.

Cinema as Refuge: Handke Goes to the Movies

There is probably no author other than Handke in modern German-language literature whose work is so prominently marked by a passion for international film.[6] In letters to his publisher Siegfried Unseld, Handke describes how he would go from theater to theater while in Paris in February 1970, watching one film after another.[7] Handke is the sort of moviegoer that Walker Percy described in his eponymous 1961 novel (which Handke translated).[8] For Handke, too, the non-place

3 Peter Handke. *The Weight of the World*, trans. Ralph Manheim, (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1984). 111.

4 Blum, "Gespräch mit Peter Handke," 81.

5 See Alexandra Ambrósio Lopes. "Wirkliche Mythen oder mythische Wirklichkeit? John Ford und Robinson Jeffers in der Prosa von Peter Handke und Botho Strauß," *Runa* 25.1 (1996): 331.

6 See Lothar Struck. *Der Geruch der Filme. Peter Handke und das Kino* (Klipphausen/Miltiz: Mirabilis, 2013); for a brief discussion of Handke's reception of John Ford, see 9–12.

7 Letter to Siegfried Unseld, February 8, 1970, in *Peter Handke. Siegfried Unseld. Der Briefwechsel*, ed. by Raimund Fellinger (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2012), 163.

8 Walker Percy. *Der Kinogeher*, trans. Peter Handke, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980).

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of cinema becomes a place of temporary dwelling, offering him much-needed refuge from the demands and burdens of human company: "As a child, offended by the world around him, he would hide in the corner of a closet; as an adult, he would go to the movies."[9] Accordingly, Joseph Bloch, the protagonist of Handke's 1970 novel *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter* (*The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*, 1972) is an avid moviegoer; one of his many obsessions is to compare the way people act and speak with what he has seen on screen.[10] As an early scene in the novel suggests, Bloch, a construction worker who will later commit a murder, regularly retreats to cinemas in order to recover from the onslaught of the signs of reality that he feels compelled to interpret: "It was a beautiful October Day. Bloch ate a hot dog at a stand and then walked past the stalls to a movie theater. Everything he saw bothered him. He tried to notice as little as possible. Inside the theater he breathed freely."[11]

Handke's enthusiasm for film is most obvious in his journals from the 1970s, where he recorded impressions such as the audience's "glittering eyeglasses" or old men falling asleep in their seats before the start of the show.[12] He also comments on new Hollywood releases such as *Taxi Driver*, while reflecting on what it means to be a great actor. By the end of 1976, Handke's moviegoing had become a form of addiction with serious repercussions: "almost every film leaves me in a state of lethargy and hopelessness, with a kind of hangover that makes me feel as if I myself and all the people around me were living corpses."[13] What Handke expresses here is a sense that the "reality" outside the movie theater looks prosaic when compared to the poetic worlds projected on-screen. The emotions evoked by the film quickly give way to disillusionment about the far-from-poetic people on the street.[14] This rather banal insight leads to the very heart of Handke's aesthetics of the tired gaze of the writer who seeks to discover the good and beautiful in people and things.

While Handke's texts from the 1980s offered few comments on the reception of cinema, the author's interest in contemporary film seems to have been rekindled after his move to Paris in 1990. In a short newspaper feature from that period, Handke not only identifies himself as an emphatic devotee of Hollywood action movies, but also attests to contemporary cinema's ability to tell "new, unheard-of

9 Peter Handke. *Die Geschichte des Bleistifts* (Salzburg/Vienna: Residenz, 1982), 30.

10 Many critics have noted the novel's cinematic style. See, for instance, Ellen Summerfield. "Die Kamera als literarisches Mittel. Zu Peter Handkes *Die Angst des Tormanns beim Elfmeter,*" *Modern Austrian Literature* 12.1 (1979).

11 Peter Handke. *The Goalie's Anxiety at the Penalty Kick*, trans. Michael Roloff (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 4.

12 Handke, *Weight of the World*, 107.

13 Handke, *Weight of the World*, 211.

14 Handke, *Weight of the World*, 117.

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stories" that express true emotions.[15] Since then, cinema has found its way back into Handke's plays and prose works.[16] This development culminated in 2011 with the novel *Der Große Fall* (*The Great Fall*, 2018) whose protagonist, an actor, sets off on a hike from the periphery of Paris to the city center – a hike that is punctuated by numerous cinematic allusions.

Notwithstanding his penchant for "serious" authors like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Martin Heidegger, or William Faulkner, Handke's writings have always been informed by the more democratic impulses of popular culture.[17] In addition to international pop music and German *Schlager*, he has been particularly fascinated with film as a key medium. In several essays and reviews published in the 1960s, a young Handke explored the aesthetics and politics of both international and domestic cinema. Perhaps best known is his 1968 feuilleton on rural cinemas and the *Heimatfilm* genre, in which he details a longer stay in Burgenland, Austria's easternmost state: "Due to the circumstances," he writes, "I couldn't avoid watching every film I hadn't seen yet, if the respective cinema wasn't too far away."[18] In this essay, Handke analyzes the narrative strategy of typical *Heimatfilme* before evoking the social significance of cinema in general. For Handke, movie theaters are inherently democratic places offering much-needed shelter from "the cold-hearted, monopolistic, alienating pure culture," and celebrating what he calls the "universally open, humane, heart-warming" *Mischkultur*.

For Handke, the American director John Ford (1894–1973) is nothing less than an incarnation of this universally accessible *Mischkultur*. Ford appeared on Handke's personal screen as early as 1971. In an unpublished journal entry, the author writes: "JOHN FORD: born Maine, 2 children, eyepatch on the left, blue eye, Catholic."[19] Ford still holds the record for winning the most Academy Awards for Best Director (four); Westerns such as *Stagecoach* (1939) and *The Searchers* (1956) are routinely counted among the best films ever made. Ford's lifelong fascination with legendary figures from American history such as Wyatt Earp and Abraham Lincoln frequently drew his films back into the distant past to explore the myths

15 Peter Handke. "Die Bilder sind nicht am Ende," in *Meine Ortstafeln. Meine Zeittafeln. 1967–2007* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), 573-575.

16 Peter Handke's latest journal, *Vor der Baumschattenwand nachts. Zeichen und Anflüge von der Peripherie 2007–2015* (Salzburg/Vienna: Jung und Jung, 2016), which gathers notes spanning the years 2007 to 2015, once again contains observations on going to the movies (170, 172, 179).

17 Handke has often insisted that his writing is anti-elitist, for example in this short exchange recorded in his journal: "Your writing is elitist." – "How can anyone who has experienced American movies be elitist?" Handke, *Weight of the World*, 13.

18 Peter Handke. "Vorläufige Bemerkungen zu Landkinos und Heimatfilmen," in *Meine Ortstafeln. Meine Zeittafeln. 1967–2007*, 527.

19 Peter Handke, *Notizbuch*, undated [presumably 1971], Schweizerisches Literaturarchiv (SLA-Schafroth A-15-c), 14. ("JOHN FORD: geb. Maine, 2 Kinder, links Augenklappe, blaues Auge, Katholik.")

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and legends firmly rooted in both popular imagination and official history. Intermingled with Ford's concern for the myths of history – or perhaps, one could say, the history of myths – is his deep and abiding love for the West as the cradle of American civilization and a potent quintessence of the American psyche. In short, Ford's cinema offers one of the most important and sustained meditations on the West in American popular culture.

John Ford is among the "artist-ancestors" ("Künstler-Vorfahren")[20] that Handke's writings continue to evoke, part of a very particular family tree whose branches have grown over years of reading and watching. Handke sees himself as part of a tradition that includes the Pre-Socratics and Chrétien de Troyes as well as the Romanesque stonemasons of the Middle Ages, German-language authors such as Goethe and Adalbert Stifter, the painters Nicolas Poussin, Paul Cézanne and Edward Hopper, the poet-singer Bob Dylan, and the American rock band Creedence Clearwater Revival. This eclectic canon has two primary functions: on the one hand, Handke tries very consciously to recognize the traces of his own work in the foreign; on the other hand, looking into the ancestral gallery also serves to put his own aesthetics to the test. In the case of John Ford, however, ambivalence soon vanishes, and there is an unconditional identification. In the early 1970s, Handke even had an article about Ford attached to the door of his Kronberg residence, as biographer Malte Herwig notes.[21] Handke felt an attraction to Ford as if they were actually related:

> I feel like a grandson of John Ford. I feel like he could be my grandfather, I think I'm like him. If I had had the same power as he did, I'd be just as nasty as he was. Benevolent and detestable. I'd probably be very capricious. He was awfully capricious. An uncannily sensitive person, full of kindness and contempt, the two were mixed in him.[22]

In what follows, I argue that the films of John Ford are central to an understanding of Handke's poetics of place and history. In fact, the connection between Handke and Ford sheds light on what Robert Halsall has called Handke's "awareness of the poetic qualities of all places in the world."[23] Contrary to what some critics have argued, Handke's fiction is very much informed by a larger economic and historical consciousness. In Ford's cinema, Handke recognizes a striving for epic truthfulness that he has called "the classical." This particular truthfulness is complemented by attention to the universal gestures and movements of human interaction and to details of everyday life, the endearing kindness of things

20 Handke, *Geschichte des Bleistifts*, 114.

21 Malte Herwig. *Meister der Dämmerung. Peter Handke. Eine Biographie*, (München: DVA, 2011), 308.

22 Cited in Herwig, *Meister der Dämmerung*, 309.

23 Robert Halsall. "'Den Nicht-Ort gibt es nicht': Handke and the Spirit of Place in *Versuch über den Stillen Ort*," *Gegenwartsliteratur* 12 (2013): 141.

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("Lieblichkeit der Dinge"),[24] which Handke also admires in Homer's epics and Virgil's *Georgica*. In an interview quoted in Handke's notebooks, Ford once described his epic mode of storytelling in more American terms, associating it with the avoidance of prominent camera movements:[25] "'You don't like to move the camera much, do you?' – 'No, because it throws the audience off. It says: 'This is a motion picture. This isn't real.' I like to have the audience feel that this is the real thing' (John Ford, 1970)."[26] For the young Handke in particular, Ford represented a cinema in which "situations and feelings are presented very carefully and gradually, without haste or the need to create an effect."[27] With this reference to Ford's narrative style, Handke truly hits the mark. Ford's films create the feeling of time standing still through extended, drawn-out sequences, during which the camera seems to develop a contemplative affinity with characters, things, and landscapes, offering "poems to duration," to borrow a phrase from Handke.

John Ford: Epic Storytelling Made in Hollywood

Peter Handke has repeatedly cast himself as a fatherless figure in search of an ersatz family. His writings continue to revolve around topics such as the search for a father, family reassurance, and the integration into communities. First and foremost is the desire to place oneself within a tradition. It is against this backdrop that the cinema of John Ford constitutes a spiritual offering for Handke, who doggedly envisions himself escaping the "chatter of the world" ("Gerede der Welt") and being absorbed into the "greater now" ("Größere Jetzt") of myth,[28] as embodied by the Western genre.[29] As film critic André Bazin argues in one of his seminal essays, the lasting global popularity of the Western is not due to its identifiable imagery and particular plot components, such as bar fights, galloping horses, and deadly shootouts, but rather the fact that it embodies "the essence of cinema."[30] Bazin

24 Handke, *Geschichte des Bleistifts*, 84.

25 See Joseph McBride and Michael Wilmington. *John Ford* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1974). – There are quite a few veiled references to McBride's biography throughout Handkes's work. See journal entries from 2007 in *Vor der Baumschattenwand nachts*, 19-20, 22, 24.

26 Handke, *Weight of the World*, 77.

27 Blum, "Gespräch mit Peter Handke," 81.

28 Peter Handke. *Gestern unterwegs. Aufzeichnungen November 1987 bis Juli 1990* (Wien/Salzburg: Jung und Jung, 2005), 155. – See also *Weight of the World*, 135, where Handke outlines his need for "new, innocent myths culled from everyday life; myths that will help me to begin *myself* all over again."

29 On the Western as a genre see John G. Cawelti. *Adventure, Mystery, and Romance. Formula Stories as Art and Popular Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 192-259.

30 André Bazin. "The Western, or the American Film par excellence," in *What is Cinema?* ed. by André Bazin, trans. Hugh Gray, vol. 2 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 141.

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concludes, "Those formal attributes by which one normally recognizes the western are simply signs or symbols of its profound reality, namely the myth."[31] In its ideal, typical version, the Western represents the epic of the American nation, as French film critic Jean Mitry explains; it could thus be seen as the American equivalent of the *Iliad* or the *Nibelungenlied*.[32] In its classical form, which combines epic narrative with lyrical enthusiasm for landscapes, heroic gestures, and movements, the Western has little concern for complex psychological development. While Ford's protagonists are not portrayed as individual characters in the way they would be in a modern novel, "they already have some psychological density," as Mitry points out: "They are alive, but they are still typecast. They are no longer archetypes, but stereotypes, or rather, highly typified characters."[33]

Given that Handke started out as a rather rebellious writer who eagerly deconstructed what he perceived as antiquated literary forms, his enthusiasm for the cinema of John Ford may come as a surprise. His reception of Ford, which combines analytical skill and critical empathy, or *Einfühlung*, can be traced back to the late 1960s. Handke had his finger on the pulse of the times; in 1970, the French magazine *Cahiers du cinéma* dedicated an entire issue to Ford's film *Young Mr. Lincoln*, with several renowned critics reading Ford's oeuvre through a Marxist-structuralist lens. What Handke and Ford have in common is their claim to narrate the world epically. Ford's Westerns, as well as his dramas and war films, engage with the world by looking at the psychology within universal constellations of human existence: rivalry and jealousy; loyalty and service to community; love and family ties; cultivation or civilization of the open spaces of the West; eternal resistance of the oppressed against their oppressors. In other words, Ford's cinema depicts what Handke calls biblical *ordinariness* or *everydayness* ("Alltäglichkeit").[34] Bazin acknowledges the Western's biblical implications when referring to Ford's *Stagecoach* as "a fine dramatic illustration of the parable of the pharisee and the publican."[35] The films are thus also subject to the principle of repetition that underpins Handke's narratives, which are minimal in plot and psychology.

Indeed, Ford's cinema represents an important element of the poetics of truth and beauty that Handke first formulated in his acceptance speech for the 1979 Franz Kafka Prize. Located in the "empire of narrative" ("Reich der Erzählung"),[36] in

31 Bazin, "The Western, or the American Film par excellence," 142.

32 Jean Mitry. "Über den Western, epischer, dramatischer, psychologischer Western," interview with Gerd Berghoff and Wolfgang Vogel. *Filmstudio* 37 (1962).

33 Mitry, "Über den Western, epischer, dramatischer, psychologischer Western."

34 Handke, *Geschichte des Bleistifts*, 35. – On Handke's attention to everydayness as refuge, see Halsall, "Handke and the Spirit of Place," 146.

35 Bazin, "The Western, or the American Film par excellence," 146.

36 Peter Handke. *Am Felsfenster morgens (und andere Ortszeiten 1982–1987)* (Salzburg/Wien: Residenz, 1998), 11.

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which the individual strands of Handke's secularized poetics of salvation converge, Ford's films make a crucial contribution to solving what Handke has called the "fundamental question," or *Grundproblem*, underlying his writing: they help the appropriately sensitized viewer rediscover and thus reconnect with an already familiar world. Fictionalization does not obscure reality; on the contrary, it allows for an emphatic experience of things. This is the teaching of cinematic experience that Handke describes in an essay for the Austrian daily *Der Standard*, titled "Appetite for the World: A Moviegoer's Reflection on this Thing Called Cinema" (1992). Handke recalls a visit several decades ago to a cinema in a suburb of Graz, where Ford's film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (1962) was being shown. Although the film was missing "large chunks," so that parts of its plot remained unclear, its impact nevertheless proved powerful. When leaving the cinema, the trees outside rustled "as trees had not rustled for me since my childhood." The film prepared viewers for a fresh appreciation of the familiar:

> And now I have yet another word for the world made real by another film: "appetizing." Yes indeed, after watching *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* I had an appetite for the world: for wind, asphalt, seasons, train stations, and not just because of the appetizing food served by substitute waiter James Stewart.[37]

In his journal, Handke describes this phenomenon of art reviving the self as follows: "How do I respond to beauty? I want to set off on a journey – away from what I perceive as beautiful, to create something beautiful of my own."[38] Reading, especially reading while roaming the countryside, fosters empathic involvement of the self in the world by affirming and intensifying one's presence in the here and now,[39] as Handke notes on the final page of his travel journal. His protagonists require daily exposure to text, "tägliche Schrift"[40] – not in order to escape the world, but to reconnect with it.[41] Therefore, his novels' frequent references to medieval epics should not be misunderstood as nostalgic escapism. To give but one example, in Handke's novel *In einer dunklen Nacht ging ich aus meinem stillen Haus* (1997; *On a Dark Night I Left my Silent House*, 2000), descriptions of the summer landscape in Hartmann von Aue's Arthurian tale *Iwein*, written around 1200, help the unnamed pharmacist to recognize "today's summer world," to see it "more clearly before his

37 Peter Handke. "Appetit auf die Welt. Rede eines Zuschauers über ein Ding namens Kino," in *Meine Ortstafeln. Meine Zeittafeln. 1967–2007* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2007), 553.

38 Handke, *Am Felsfenster morgens*, 12.

39 Handke, *Gestern unterwegs*, 553.

40 Peter Handke. *Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1980), 9.

41 See Thorsten Carstensen (ed.). *Die tägliche Schrift. Peter Handke als Leser* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2019).

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eyes."[42] Reading *Iwein* allows for "daily travel through space"[43] to natural things, refreshing the sense and appreciation of the present in the same way that active recollection does. In a similar fashion, John Ford's cinema whets this appetite for the world. However, his films not only make the present truly real, they also recreate images and perceptions from the viewer's childhood. The rustling of the trees, which links the cinematic experience with the real world upon leaving the movie theater, is therefore doubly coded. On the one hand, it serves to highlight an ideal sense of the here and now; on the other hand, it refers to the kind of quintessential, primal experience of nature that Handke's texts conjure up in ever-new variations.
Handke's identification with Ford culminates in the play *Die Fahrt im Einbaum* (1999; *Voyage by Dugout*, 2012), in which two filmmakers meet in order to make a film about the war in Yugoslavia.[44] One of them, bearing the name Luis Machado, is modeled after the Spanish director Luis Buñuel (his name also identifies him as the fictitious grandson of the Spanish poet Antonio Machado, whom Handke has cited as kindred spirit). The other is John Ford, appearing here under the name John O'Hara.[45] Early on in *Voyage by Dugout*, O'Hara/Ford outlines the very ideals of epic storytelling that Handke has pursued in his own writings. As the American director puts it, "The older I get, the more I find that speed interferes with my experience of something."[46] Movies, he argues, ought to opt for a slow narration that produces the feeling of time lingering:

> "I want a nice chronological narrative, with no deeper meanings or sidelong glances. The telling should be like breathing in and out, whether with the breath of the Great Spirit of the Rockies or of the Ebro or Danube deltas."[47]
>
> "Justice or not, the main thing is the rhythm of our film. If the rhythm is right, the whole film will be right."[48]
>
> "No commentaries. There are no commentaries in my films."[49]
>
> "Spare me the theory. This is supposed to be a feature film."[50]

42 Peter Handke. *In einer dunklen Nacht ging ich aus meinem stillen Haus* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1997), 47.
43 Handke, *Geschichte des Bleistifts*, 176.
44 Peter Handke. "Voyage by Dugout, or The Play of the Film of the War." *PAJ: A Journal of Performance and Art* 34.2 (2012): 61-99.
45 The two directors' identities are barely masked. In fact, in an early draft of the play, they were explicitly named Ford and Buñuel. For facsimiles of the manuscript, see "Die Fahrt im Einbaum (1999)," *Handke online,* URL: https://handkeonline.onb.ac.at/node/955 (accessed October 10, 2019).
46 Handke, "Voyage by Dugout," 63.
47 Handke, "Voyage by Dugout," 66.
48 Handke, "Voyage by Dugout," 66.
49 Handke, "Voyage by Dugout," 67.
50 Handke, "Voyage by Dugout," 68.

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O'Hara and Machado have agreed on different roles. While the European, with his "love for secrets, reversed roles, sudden turns,"[51] specializes in psychological depth and will therefore handle monologues and dreams, the American director is tasked with staging straightforward action such as "the fights and the songs" and filming exterior shots and dialogue.[52] In other words, the John Ford of *Voyage by Dugout* represents utter exteriority; his films – as well as America, as Handke views it – offer an epic alternative to the academic interiority of European culture.

The Lesson of *Young Mr. Lincoln*

References to the cinema of John Ford can be traced throughout Peter Handke's writings since the 1970s. Nowhere, however, is the fabric of biographical and cinematic allusions more tightly woven than in *Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied* (1972; *Short Letter, Long Farewell*, 1974). Handke's novel chronicles the American journey of a nameless young German from coast to coast, focused on his continuous self-reinvention rather than the discovery of a foreign land. When *Short Letter, Long Farewell* was first published in 1972, many critics were disturbed by the fact that Handke refused to acknowledge West German discourse on the United States – a discourse shaped by the fear that the country might drift into fascism. Critics often quote Reinhard Baumgart's astonishment at the fact that Handke would deliberately ignore contemporary politics and socioeconomic conditions in America. Baumgart considered the fact that the narrator would travel to a "sick" country like the United States in order to be revived by spending his time reading novels and watching films to be a distinct provocation:

> Handke's United States by no means coincide with those in the newspaper. There is hardly a trace of Vietnam, and the Harlem ghetto flashes by in eight lines. This man on an educational journey denies us the popular role of the socially engaged tourist. He obviously prefers to think about himself rather than the big picture.[53]

The critics were right: *Short Letter, Long Farewell* does not address contemporary political issues. For Handke's narrator, America is a "specular medium;"[54] it functions as a catalyst that sets in motion "not the exploration of a foreign country but of the person who enters it," as Gerd Gemünden writes. *Short Letter, Long Farewell*

51 Handke, "Voyage by Dugout," 66.

52 Handke, "Voyage by Dugout," 66.

53 Reinhard Baumgart. "Vorwärts, zurück in die Zukunft," in *Über Peter Handke,* ed. by Michael Scharang (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1972), 91-92.

54 Gerd Gemünden. *Framed Visions. Popular Culture, Americanization, and the Contemporary German and Austrian Imagination* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 133-157.

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is a novel of development disguised as a road trip; clearly, the protagonist of this *Bildungsroman* is more interested in the books he is reading – Gottfried Keller's *Der Grüne Heinrich* and F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* – and the films he is watching than in the cities and landscapes he passes. As Christoph Parry notes, "References to the cinema abound in the novel to such an extent that it becomes questionable whether the real referent of the work is the actual physical space of America or rather its flat cinematic image."[55] In an interview with *Der Spiegel* shortly after the publication of his novel, Handke described America as "a dream world in which one is forced to rediscover oneself, in which one must start completely from scratch," continuing:

> It's just very difficult to relate the whole story to real America. After all, America is only a pretext for this story, an attempt to find a distant world in which I can become personal. For if I were to situate the same adventure in Europe, I wouldn't be able to think of a place where the objects, where the external world would pose a similar challenge. Likewise, I wouldn't be able to think of a place that would evoke the same depersonalization and alienation in me as America.[56]

What Handke's protagonist learns about America he learns from John Ford, who in this novel takes on the role of the wise old teacher. Consequently, the narrator's journey across the United States comes to an end in Bel Air – or, more precisely, on John Ford's front porch – with the director telling stories and even uttering a surprised "Ach Gott." His desire to visit Ford is sparked by a screening of *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939), the director's film about the early life of Abraham Lincoln. Watching the film at a theater in St. Louis, the narrator imagines a future life devoid of the kind of anxiety and self-doubt that have shaped his European existence:

> Looking at the images of the past, scenes from the early life of Abraham Lincoln, I dreamed of my own future; the people on the screen prefigured the people I would meet. The longer I watched, the more eager I became to meet only people like those in the picture; then I would never again have to pretend; like them I would be fully present in body and mind, an equal moving among equals, carried along by their motion, yet free to be myself while respecting the freedom of others.[57]

Handke's narrator goes on to relate this ideal of a balanced, peaceful, unconcerned American who is both himself and comfortable with others to various parts of

55 Christoph Parry. *Peter Handke's Landscapes of Discourse. An Exploration of Narrative and Cultural Space* (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 2003), 77.

56 Hellmuth Karasek. "Ohne zu verallgemeinern," interview with Peter Handke. *Die Zeit*, March 31, 1972.

57 Peter Handke. *Short Letter, Long Farewell*, trans. Ralph Manheim. (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1974), 114.

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the movie. As Robert Halsall has argued, the passage surely reflects Handke's belief at the time that the surface presence of Hollywood cinema is preferable to the pretensions of interior depth more common in European art film.[58] At the same time, however, Henry Fonda's Lincoln (Fig. 8) is considered to embody the kind of "equanimity and groundedness"[59] that both the protagonists of Handke's novels and the *alter egos* of his journals strive for. While Handke's narrators are often alienated from themselves and others, falling into a state of exaggerated and alarming self-consciousness that leaves them graceless and clumsy, the interaction between characters in *Young Mr. Lincoln* is seen as ideal:[60]

> At one point in the picture, he and an old trapper were riding through the spring landscape on a donkey. Lincoln was wearing a top hat, his feet were almost dragging on the ground, and he was playing a jew's-harp. "What kind of an instrument is that?" the trapper asked. "A jew's-harp," said Lincoln. "Funny people making that kind of music," said the trapper. "But it sounds real purty." The one strumming the jew's-harp, the other wagging his head in time, they were long seen riding through the countryside.[61]

Handke's narrator is equally impressed by the great dignity and humanity conveyed in the film's final scene:

> Leaning out of the covered wagon as the family prepared to continue their journey westward, the mother handed Abraham Lincoln a pouch containing his fee. "Take it, it's all I have!" And Lincoln took it! "Thank you, ma'am!" Then he left the settlers and went up on a hill alone.[62]

While *Short Letter, Long Farewell* pays homage to Ford's oeuvre in general, *Young Mr. Lincoln* continues to especially fascinate Handke, as a journal entry from the late 1970s suggests:

> This evening reread passages from the Bible, then saw *Young Mr. Lincoln* again: shaken out of my daily perplexities, but these are not eliminated or thrust aside, rather they are made to shine as something that can and must be borne (Hagar, who, when she thought her child would die of thirst – they had been sent out into the desert – did not go away, but "sat over against him"; and Henry Fonda's Abraham Lincoln, with his

58 Robert Halsall. "Place, Autonomy and the Individual: *Short Letter, Long Farewell* and *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams*," in *The Works of Peter Handke: International Perspectives*, ed. by David N. Coury and Frank Pilipp (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 2005), 54-55.

59 Peter Handke. *The Great Fall: A Story*, trans. Krishna Winston (London: Seagull Books, 2018), 14.

60 See Rainer Nägele. "Die vermittelte Welt. Reflexionen zum Verhältnis von Fiktion und Wirklichkeit in Peter Handkes Roman 'Der kurze Brief zum langen Abschied'." *Jahrbuch der Deutschen Schillergesellschaft* 19 (1975): 404.

61 Handke, *Short Letter*, 116.

62 Handke, *Short Letter*, 116.

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> bodily movements as calm and clear as letters from another Bible); I had to take a deep breath to keep from crying.[63]

Furthermore, in *Short Letter, Long Farewell*, the narrator's mesmerized reaction to the St. Louis screening of *Young Mr. Lincoln* is what motivates his decision to visit John Ford in his California home of Bel Air:

> I'm going to ask him about his memories of the picture, and whether he still sees Henry Fonda, who's doing soap operas on TV now. I'm going to tell him that I learned about America from that picture, that it taught me to understand history by seeing people in nature, and that it made me happy. I'm going to ask him to tell me what he used to be like and how America has changed since he stopped making pictures.[64]

This excerpt is crucial for understanding Handke's poetics of time and space, as well as his particular attitude towards history. Not only have Ford's movies taught the narrator about America (the mentality of its people and the forces that have shaped the country as an idea); they have also taught him a sense of history beyond dates and political facts – a history that comes to life through the stories of people within their natural surroundings. It is this lesson that Handke has taken to heart, implementing it time and time again in his epics and travelogues since the late 1970s.

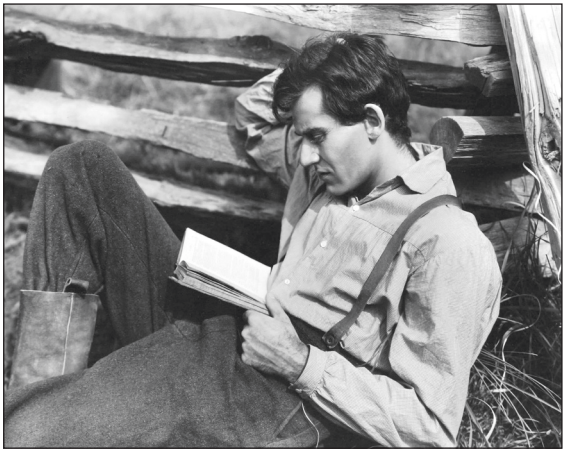

Fig. 8: Henry Fonda as Abraham Lincoln in Ford's *Young Mr. Lincoln* (1939) (© akg-images/Album /20TH CENTURY FOX).

63 Handke, *Weight of the World*, 202. See also *Weight of the World*, 242-243: "A great actor like Robert de Niro speaks and moves like model and copy in one (he exists, and in existing describes a life); envious thought that with their intense, selfless concern for others such actors are the true writers: *their* writing is self-explanatory (like Henry Fonda's movements, which appear to me as letters)."

64 Handke, *Short Letter*, 116.

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In *Short Letter, Long Farewell*, the protagonist's "pilgrimage"[65] to Ford's house in California – an episode Handke invented, unlike many of the other travel details that make up the plot – becomes an epiphany. Built in colonial style and surrounded by orange and cypress trees, Ford's home is described as a mythical cradle of storytelling: "For visitors there is a row of wicker chairs; in front of them, footstools covered with Indian blankets. People sitting in those chairs tend to tell stories."[66] Ford is characterized by the way he communicates. Unlike stereotypical know-it-all Europeans, Ford is careful not to torment his interlocutors with opinions. Instead, he comes across as the quintessential American storyteller:

> John Ford repeated a good deal of what I had heard about America […] during my trip. His ideas were not new, but he backed them up with stories. Sometimes, when you asked a general question, his mind would jump from the general to the particular and he'd talk about incidents in his life and people he'd known. He never judged these people, he simply told us what they had said and done.[67]

The doctrine proclaimed by the fictional John Ford in the final sequence of *Short Letter, Long Farewell* reveals Handke's personal myth of America as an explicitly positive alternative to what comes across as a rather unappealing European mindset. First and foremost, Ford's America is a country in which Handke's vision of narrative as the predominant form of communication, as described in *Weight of the World*, has been realized: "The human dignity of the past tense: more and more, storytelling strikes me as the only adequate mode of speech."[68] According to Handke, Ford's America is also a country that places the value of community above everything else:

> "We Americans always say 'we' even when we're talking about our private affairs," said John Ford. "Maybe it's because we see everything we do as part of a common effort. […] Here in America nobody sulks and nobody crawls into his own shell. We don't long to be alone; when a man's alone, he's contemptible; all he can do is poke around in himself, and when he hasn't anybody but himself to talk with, he dries up after the first word."[69]

While hypersensitive Europeans desire solitude and uniqueness, according to the director's simplified view, Americans share common ideas and goals and thus feel more comfortable being absorbed in larger, epic contexts. "That's why I've always preferred to make pictures about things that happened before my time," concludes the fictional John Ford in *Short Letter, Long Farewell*. "I don't feel much nostalgia for my own past; what makes me nostalgic is things I never got around to doing

65 Parry, *Peter Handke's Landscapes of Discourse*, 77.
66 Handke, *Short Letter*, 159.
67 Handke, *Short Letter*, 160.
68 Handke, *Weight of the World*, 96.
69 Handke, *Short Letter*, 161.

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and places where I've never been."[70] In Handke's introspective writings, this departure from one's own self often remains wishful thinking. Ford is certainly a muse for Handke, but there is a reason why the American director is given a Spanish sidekick in *Voyage by Dugout*: Luis Buñuel, creator of the Surrealist classic *Un chien andalou* (1929), embodies the dreamlike internal dimension of narration, the need for self-enquiry that is always present in Handke's texts. Handke himself has pointed out this second reason for his narrative: "I emerge from my dreams."[71]

Sincere Solidarity: Struggle and Community

John Ford's cinema is rooted in American history, in the history of western expansion – "the momentum of a great nation pushing westward," as one of the intertitles at the beginning of *The Iron Horse* (1924) puts it with typical Fordian pathos – and the conflict between tradition and modernity that arises from the ideology of manifest destiny. *The Iron Horse*, Ford's fiftieth film, is the director's first epic Western. The heroic tale of the construction of the first transcontinental railroad provides the historical backdrop for the story of Davy Brandon, a young surveyor for Union Pacific, whose father had been murdered many years before while pursuing his own dream of a rail link between the East and the West. Character and landscape inform and subtly reflect one another as the story moves relentlessly towards the driving of the final spike near Promontory, Utah, on May 10, 1869 – a historic event captured by A. J. Russell in his famous "Champagne Photograph" (Fig. 9). In Handke's novel *Short Letter, Long Farewell*, the narrator offers a short yet comprehensive summary of the film before sharing his viewing experience:

> After long years, which were painfully long in the picture as well, for the construction work was shown in great detail, the two lines met at Promontory Point, Utah, and the president drove a golden spike into the last tie. Whereupon the dreamer's son and the president's daughter kissed for the first time since their parting as children. Though I didn't know why, I had felt wretched throughout the picture – shooting pains in my chest, compulsive swallowing, internal soreness, itching, chills – but the moment the spike was driven in and the two fell into each other's arms, I felt their embrace inside me and I stretched inwardly with a sense of infinite relief: my whole body had hungered for the two of them to come together.[72]

70 Handke, *Short Letter*, 162.

71 Ulrich Greiner, "'Ich komme aus dem Traum,'" interview with Peter Handke. *Die Zeit*, February 1, 2006.

72 Handke, *Short Letter*, 83.

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When John Ford, son of Catholic-Irish immigrants, retraces the history of the American nation in films like *The Iron Horse*, political aspects naturally play a role. Later, in *The Searchers* (1956), Ford addresses racism and thus questions the founding myth of the USA. At the heart of Ford's cinema, however, one encounters a constellation focused on the individual and his or her place in the world: the desire to make the land hospitable, to build a home, to create and defend communities. In Ford's cinema, the USA is a country that becomes practically uninhabitable due to the mutual hatred between pioneers and Native Americans; it is a country in which, as Georg Seeßlen writes, Native Americans can no longer live and the arriving white settlers cannot yet.[73] Ford's films continually address the question of how human communities – and in most cases, these are the communities of white settlers – can persist in the face of history's challenges, and how they can master the immense, hard-to-tame land they find on the North American continent. In his journal, Handke coined a formula for this kind of storytelling that particularly applies to Ford's films: "Western: remembering the dream of proving oneself."[74]

Fig. 9: Andrew J. Russell, *Champagne Photograph*, East and West shaking Hands at Laying last Rail, May 10, 1869.

73 Georg Seeßlen. *Filmwissen: Western. Grundlagen des populären Films* (Marburg: Schüren, 2011), 111.

74 Handke, *Geschichte des Bleistifts*, 9.

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In Ford's films, the motif of proving oneself is linked to that "*feeling* of community"[75] that Handke's texts continuously evoke. The negative characters in Ford's films are for the most part not ordinary criminals driven by lowly motives; it is because their actions endanger the good of the community that they must be controlled or hunted down.[76] In this context, the social dance event becomes Ford's leitmotif, which illustrates the new incantation of social cohesion after periods of discord or struggle.[77] As one of the many "ceremonial gestures"[78] that make up his films, dance takes on the form of a solemn ritual designed to authenticate and strengthen community structures. In *Two Rode Together*, the disturbance of a dance points to a rift in the community. Let us first take a look at the famous dance scene in *The Grapes of Wrath* (1940), Ford's adaptation of John Steinbeck's bestseller of the same name, published a year earlier. Both the novel and the film are moving portraits of the Depression era, with Ford highlighting the role of the family as an entity that helps nurture identity. Handke recalls the dance scene in *Die Lehre der Sainte-Victoire* (1980), where he relates Ford to Paul Cézanne and Adalbert Stifter, his two other teachers:

> All those present are dancing to ward off a grave menace: driven from place to place by landlessness, they are defending the bit of soil on which they have finally found a home and refuge, from the enemies all around them. Although the dancing is purely a stratagem (while whirling each other about, mother, son, and all the rest exchange wily, vigilant looks), it is nevertheless a dance like other dances (and as none before it), a dance of warmth and solidarity.[79]

Handke highlights two aspects in this scene that are equally relevant for his own writings. On the one hand, the dance helps create a symbolic union of the dispossessed, whose claims Ford recognizes through camera angles and editing. On the other hand, the scene also establishes a strong bond between mother and son, who are seen as accomplices, thus skipping what critics have called paternal authority.[80] Even more famous is the dance sequence in *My Darling Clementine* (1946), Ford's iconic, mournful Western that has also made several appearances in Handke's work. In fact, it is among the few select topics that the female protagonist of the 2002 novel *Der Bildverlust* (*Crossing the Sierra de Gredos*, 2007) is willing to dis-

75 Handke, *Geschichte des Bleistifts*, 47.

76 Cf. John Baxter. *The Cinema of John Ford* (New York: A.S. Barnes, 1971), 100.

77 For an account of the role of dancing in Ford's cinema, see Brian Spittles. *John Ford* (New York: Longman, 2002), 38-39.

78 McBride and Wilmington, *John Ford*, 28.

79 Peter Handke, *Slow Homecoming*, trans. Ralph Manheim (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1985), 177.

80 Hans Höller. *Eine ungewöhnliche Klassik nach 1945. Das Werk Peter Handkes* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013), 53.

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cuss with a journalist.[81] Further references to *My Darling Clementine* can be found in *Immer noch Sturm* (2010) and *Die schönen Tage von Aranjuez* (2012). The film's main character is Wyatt Earp (Henry Fonda), who is hired as a new marshal to restore peace in the fledgling town of Tombstone. The film describes the process of bringing "civilization" to the town by dealing a just punishment to old Clanton and his four sons, who murdered Earp's youngest brother.[82] Various motifs characteristic of John Ford's cinema converge in the film's central dance episode. After his visit to the barber, the "symbolic high priest of civilization"[83] who likes to use just a little too much floral eau de toilette on his customers,[84] Wyatt Earp meets the young Clementine. Together they head down to the church, which is still under construction and due to be consecrated on this very Sunday. Church bells are ringing as the couple gracefully strides towards the town's emergent center, and the Protestant hymn "Shall We Gather at the River?" plays on the soundtrack.[85] The church may consist of nothing but a foundation and a skeletal bell tower, but the American flag billowing in the wind is already an eloquent sign of community. Following a short dedication ceremony, Wyatt and Clementine join the dance on the church floor. With the temporary connection between the male hero and the female schoolteacher, the symbol of social responsibility found in many Westerns, Ford dissolves the genre's two fundamental forces: the opposing elements of wilderness and civilization.[86] To quote Robin Wood, their dance embodies, "the union of the natural with the cultivated."[87]

While Ford may have attempted to reconstruct Tombstone in an authentic way, the dance sequence goes beyond the scope of the retelling.[88] Only loosely connected to the actual plot of the film, the entire episode is conceived as an allegory. Here Ford succeeds in what Handke elevates to an essential principle of his own

81 Peter Handke. *Crossing the Sierra de Gredos*, trans. Krishna Winston (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 252.

82 See Jörg Glasenapp. "Der sitzende Marschall. Reinigung und Selbstreinigung in John Fords 'My Darling Clementine'." *Weimarer Beiträge* 58.1 (2012): 9-22.

83 McBride and Wilmington, *John Ford*, 96.

84 See Handke's comment in *Weight of the World*, 238: "The barber stands in the doorway and watches his passing victims."

85 For a discussion of the use of music in *My Darling Clementine*, see Kathryn Marie Kalinak. *How the West Was Sung: Music in the Westerns of John Ford* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007), 76-90.

86 See Barry Keith Grant. "John Ford and James Fenimore Cooper. Two Rode Together," in *John Ford Made Westerns. Filming the Legend in the Sound Era*, ed. by Gaylyn Studlar and Matthew Bernstein (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 196.

87 Robin Wood. "'*Shall* We Gather at the River?' The Late Films of John Ford," in *John Ford Made Westerns. Filming the Legend in the Sound Era*, ed. by Gaylyn Studlar and Matthew Bernstein (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), 32.

88 For a discussion of the dance sequence, see Stefan Fleischer. "A Study through Stills of *My Darling Clementine*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 3.2 (April 1973).

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art of storytelling: he transforms concepts and ideas into universal images. For Ford, the communal harmony portrayed in this scene forms the basis of any true civilization. The newborn civilization is taking its first maturity test, as people are coming together to celebrate the fact that they have defied the wild land. It may be a dedication, but there is no praying or preaching; instead, the church becomes a dance floor. As Wood points out, the church floor is the new social center of the village, and Ford's religion is a religion under the banner of community.[89]

Immortalizing Landscapes

"Above all else, weren't the great poets intimately familiar with place?", Handke once asked in his journal.[90] This rhetorical question contains a central motif of his late epic narratives, namely the writer's desire to become familiar with places, to absorb "landscapes, locations, rivers, mountain ranges, plain horizons," because "why else would I be travelling?"[91] In an interview with Herbert Gamper, Handke characterized himself as a "writer of places" ("Orts-Schriftsteller"): "For me, places are the spaces, the limitations, that first produce experiences. My starting point is never a story or an event, an incident, but always a place. I don't want to describe the place, I want to narrate it. It brings me the greatest pleasure."[92] Since the late 1970s, Handke has been concerned with "immortalizing" landscapes, albeit not in the sense of describing them in a realist manner, but rather through "the stories of people."[93] In his late works, Handke's storytelling is guided by the insight that only places where there are visible traces of human presence – or, more precisely, human labor[94] – can be activated for his project of long duration:

> Nature itself balks at description, as does civilization itself; but I am quite intent on the places where nature and civilization join together into a kind of arcade; intent on components for the White City that can be found everywhere. It is not the small moraine

89 Wood, "'*Shall* We Gather at the River?' The Late Films of John Ford," 39. – According to Wood, notwithstanding its rather plain plot, *My Darling Clementine* possesses an auratic element of truthfulness that the later *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* lacks (24). Thus, *My Darling Clementine* can be considered "Ford's most harmonious vision of a primitive but developing civilization" (32).

90 Handke, *Geschichte des Bleistifts*, 168.

91 Handke, *Gestern unterwegs*, 285.

92 Peter Handke and Herbert Gamper. *Aber ich lebe nur von den Zwischenräumen. Ein Gespräch, geführt von Herbert Gamper* (Zürich: Ammann, 1987), 19. See also Handke, *Weight of the World*, 204: "Literature: discover localities that have not yet been claimed by meaning."

93 Handke, *Geschichte des Bleistifts*, 227.

94 See Wendelin Schmidt-Dengler. "Laboraverimus. Vergil, der Landbau und Handkes Wiederholungen," in *Peter Handke. Poesie der Ränder,* ed. by Klaus Amann, Fabjan Hafner, and Karl Wagner (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau, 2006), 158-159.

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> lake here in untouched nature that warms my heart, but the river bridge I just leaned upon, or the low stone walls of the pasture landscape.[95]

The reference to man-made stone walls reveals the need to uncover the traces of an ancient material past. It is precisely *not* untouched nature to which Handke's wandering narrators are drawn. Poetic fantasy is inspired by the abandoned railway tracks in the Spanish plateau or the old cattle tracks of Slovenia. In this interplay of nature and civilization, another history of humanity can be imagined – a history of long duration, always threatened by modernization, war, and displacement. Handke's reflections on narrating space dovetail nicely with elements at the heart of John Ford's cinema. From the very beginning, the cinema of John Ford has been inscribed with the very sense of place ("Ortskenntnis") that Handke considers the writer's true "capital."[96] Ford once said that the Western's claim to an accurate representation of reality is above all connected with its ability to survey the land.[97] As perhaps the greatest "myth maker"[98] of American cinema, Ford depicts American geography and history through the stories of people. He was the first director to film in Monument Valley, a place he always described in interviews as his favorite shooting location.[99] The history of the American West has always been a history of medial representation, and Ford's own appropriation of the American myth is linked to a tradition that extends back into the 19th century, when landscape painters invented the very concept of the "American West." Ford's way of staging both humans and animals against the backdrop of Monument Valley's bizarre rock formations is not only indebted to the landscape paintings of artists such as Albert Bierstadt and Thomas Moran.[100] As Ford stated in interviews with Peter Bogdanovich, he also drew on the the iconic depictions of frontier life by painter Frederic Remington (1861–1909) when directing his films.[101]

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95 Peter Handke. *Phantasien der Wiederholung* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1983),55.

96 Handke, *Am Felsfenster morgens*, 13.

97 Bill Libby. "The Old Wrangler Rides Again [1964]," in *John Ford. Interviews*, ed. by Gerald Peary (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2001), 56: "The thing most accurately portrayed in the Western is the land. I think you can say that the real star of my Westerns is the land."

98 Peter Bogdanovich. "A Tribute to John Ford," in *John Ford in Focus. Essays on the Filmmaker's Life and Work*, ed. by Kevin L. Stoehr and Michael C. Connolly (Jefferson, NC/London, 2008), 12.

99 See Libby, "The Old Wrangler Rides Again," 56: "My favorite location is Monument Valley, which lies where Utah and Arizona merge. It has rivers, mountains, plains, desert, everything the land can offer. I feel at peace there. I have been all over the world, but I consider this the most complete, beautiful and peaceful place on earth."

100 See also Peter Cowie. *John Ford and the American West* (New York: H.N. Abrams, 2004), 18-22.

101 See also Edward Buscombe. "Painting the Legend. Frederic Remington and the Western," in *John Ford Made Westerns. Filming the Legend in the Sound Era*, ed. by Gaylyn Studlar and Matthew Bernstein (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001). – In addition to Remington's paintings, Ford also modeled his scenes on Timothy H. O'Sullivan's photographs of the untamed

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Monument Valley forms more than just a backdrop for Ford's stories. As the narrator of Handke's *Don Juan (erzählt von ihm selbst)* (2004; *Don Juan: His Own Version*, 2010) claims, the sculpted sandstone buttes of Monument Valley are a perfectly fitting setting for Ford's stories, just "as perhaps the desolate walls of the Italian industrial suburbs" are for Neorealist cinema.[102] Handke's comparison of the two settings, so different at first glance, reminds the reader that Monument Valley possesses a distinctly architectural quality, like few other landscapes.[103] The wide, open landscape of the American West is an essential crystallization point for the plot – as Jane Tompkins has indicated, it is an omnipresent feature that every character has to confront. Biblical connotations can hardly be overlooked in many Westerns. Pure, absolute space is a prehistoric fact; man must master it in an everlasting struggle. The first shot of *My Darling Clementine* alludes to this. We see the inhospitable land stretching flat into the distance, where a wagon train slowly moves forward between the few hills.[104] The western desert is the New World waiting to be conquered and populated.[105]

Human Dignity

It is the task of the writer, Handke states in his journal, to devote his energy to carving out human dignity.[106] This would also be an apt description of Ford's ethics of storytelling. His Westerns imbue their characters with humanity and dignity: Abraham Lincoln, the noble, somewhat awkward young lawyer; the Joad family in *The Grapes of Wrath*, who leave behind the Oklahoma Dust Bowl hoping to embark on a new life in California; the gallant, reassuring Wyatt Earp in *My Darling Clementine*; or the Native Americans in *Cheyenne Autumn*. This agenda is equally obvious, however, in his attempt to poeticize simple, impoverished workers. Ford's films address the constant endangerment of permanence by the forces of capitalism and by nature itself. Nowhere is this more evident than in *The Grapes*

American West. O'Sullivan produced his iconic images while accompanying two government surveys of the West in the 1860s and 1870s.

102 Peter Handke. *Don Juan: His Own Version* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010), 18. – Handke sees an intrinsic connection between epic storytelling and landscape. As he writes, "Balzac was able to write epic stories because he loved landscapes." Handke, *Phantasien der Wiederholung*, 66.

103 For a discussion of the monumentality of the landscape of the Western, which seems superhuman and man-made at the same time, see Jane Tompkins. "Landscape: The Language of the Western," in *The Big Empty: Essays on Western Landscapes as Narrative*, ed. by Leonard Engel (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994), 290.

104 Tompkins, "Landscape: The Language of the Western," 283-285.

105 Tompkins, "Landscape: The Language of the Western," 288.

106 Handke, *Geschichte des Bleistifts*, 5-6.

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of Wrath, where the Joad family is forced to give up the cultivation of their land. Ford zooms in on the greatness of modest heartland Americans who may end up losing their property due to economic forces beyond their control, but who will never surrender their dignity. As Ma Joad puts it in her final monologue in *The Grapes of Wrath*: "Rich fellas come up an' they die, an' their kids ain't no good an' they die out. But we keep a'comin'. We're the people that live. They can't wipe us out; they can't lick us. We'll go on forever, Pa, 'cause we're the people."
Likewise, the mineworker epic *How Green Was My Valley* (1941) links the longing for premodern, rural community to honest hard work. Set in 19th-century southern Wales, the film tells the story of the Morgan family and their response to industrialization. *How Green Was My Valley* locates human dignity in community and family rituals, as the film's masterful opening sequence makes clear. We see the workers leaving the mine and descending into the village, singing proud songs. Meanwhile, the narrator states that this corresponds to the soul of the Welsh people: "Someone would strike up a song, and the valley would ring with the sound of many voices – for singing is in my people as sight is in the eye." Outside the Morgan family home, the mother is already waiting with her outstretched apron, into which the returning men throw their day's wages, one by one. In the next shot, the men are in the garden, gleefully washing the soot from their blackened faces and bodies. Not only do the younger siblings come to their assistance, the scene's humorous climax comes when the mother pours a bucket of water over the head of the father – who is lying in the tub and smoking a pipe – probably as a reminder that dinner is waiting. The voiceover emphasizes the family dimension of this evening ritual:

> Then came the scrubbing – out in the back yard. It was the duty of my sister Angharad to bring the buckets of hot water and cold. And I performed what little tasks I could as my father and brothers scrubbed the coal dust from their backs. Most would come off them, but some would stay for life. It is the honorable badge of the coal miner – and I envied it on my father and grown-up brothers. Scrub and scrub, and Mr. Coal would lie there and laugh at you.

A similar scene of communal homecoming after manual labor can be found in Handke's *Versuch über die Müdigkeit*, a dialogue composed of questions and answers.[107] After a long day of threshing grain, the men, women, and children of the village sit exhausted but content in quiet harmony in the afternoon sun – a memory that is linked to the ideal of a "people" that bears no national connotations:

107 In an interview, Handke has confirmed the truthfulness of this childhood memory. See *Peter Handke im Gespräch mit Hubert Patterer und Stefan Winkler* (Graz: Edition Kleine Zeitung, 2012), 55.

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> During my childhood in the late forties and fifties, the arrival of the threshing machine was still an event. The grain was not harvested automatically in the fields – by a combine that takes in the sheaves on one side, while sacks of grain all ready for the miller tumble out on the other side. No, the threshing was done in our home barn by a rented machine that went from farm to farm at harvest time. Its use required a whole chain of helpers. One of these would lift a sheaf of grain out of the farm wagon, which remained in the open because it was much too wide and piled much too high to get into the barn; he would toss it down to the next, who would pass it on […] to the "big man" in the great rumbling machine which, making the entire barn tremble with its vibrations, would swing the sheaf around and push it gently between the threshing cylinders. Straw came pouring out at the back of the machine, where it formed a pile which the next helper, with a long wooden pitchfork, would pass on to the last links in the chain, the village children, as a rule all present and accounted for […].[108]

Handke's *Versuch über die Müdigkeit*, however, is not about romanticizing manual labor as such. The text makes it quite clear that both the noise of the machine and the dust produced by the threshing are difficult to tolerate. What Handke does glorify is the motif of collective toil and the benevolent tiredness enveloping and transfiguring the entire village. Herein lies the parallel not only to the exhausted but happy mining family in *How Green Was My Valley*, but also to the American settlers in Ford's frontier narratives. Once the threshing is done, a vision of eternal peace settles over the workers and their surroundings:

> What silence, not only in the barn, but throughout the countryside; and what light, enfolding rather than blinding you. While the clouds of dust settled, we gathered in the farmyard on shaking knees, reeling and staggering, partly in fun. Our legs and arms were covered with scratches; we had straw in our hair, between our fingers and toes. And perhaps the most lasting effect of the day's work: the nostrils of men, women, and children alike were black, not just gray, with dust. Thus we sat – in my recollection always out of doors in the afternoon sun – savoring our common tiredness whether or not we were talking, some sitting on a bench, some on a wagon shaft, still others off on the grass of the bleaching field – the inhabitants of the whole neighborhood, regardless of generation, gathered in episodic harmony by our tiredness.[109]

In Handke's works, the utopian idea of non-alienating labor[110] is contrasted with the real-life situation of powerless folks. But the dream remains, and it is constantly renewed through storytelling.

108 Peter Handke. *Essay on Tiredness*, trans. Ralph Manheim, in *The Jukebox and Other Essays on Storytelling*, trans. Ralph Manheim and Krishna Winston (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994), 13-14.

109 Handke, *Essay on Tiredness*, 14-15.

110 Höller, *Eine ungewöhnliche Klassik nach 1945*, 54.

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Handke has always been concerned with simple people who have been forgotten by the system – and their will to survive. His interest in the Western, which he associates with enduring "great hardships,"[111] can also be traced back to the fact that he sees himself as "a man without a history, from a family without a history."[112] In an interview with Ulrich Greiner, Handke describes himself as a "follower of the ancestor cult," expressing his wish to engage in a conversation with his ancestors "because they were great people who perished."[113] Having grown up in a working-class family, Handke derives his authority as a writer not least from the responsibility of honoring his ancestors by writing about them. When Filip Kobal embarks on his journey to Slovenia in *Die Wiederholung* (1986; *Repetition*, 1988), he does so in the footsteps of his brother Gregor, who went missing in action during World War II. This journey varies the structure of the *Bildungsroman*, as the novel deals primarily with the development of the protagonist on a biographical level. The travelogue is linked to a reappraisal of the geography of childhood. This stems from the need "to represent the rights of the ancestors" and thus "to honor the dead,"[114] as the journal puts it. Filip Kobal repeats the geography of childhood in order "to prove myself in my own way worthy of my forebears and to save what they stood for."[115] Even *Wunschloses Unglück* (1972; *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams*, 1974), the autobiographical novella in which Handke recapitulates his mother's life and suicide, is rooted in the historical awareness of having to give voice to the dispossessed, albeit in retrospect:

> Well then, it began with my mother being born more than fifty years ago in the same village where she died. At that time all the land that was good for anything in the region belonged either to the church or to noble land-owners; part of it was leased to the population, which consisted mostly of artisans and small peasants. The general indigence was such that few peasants owned their land. For practical purposes, the conditions were the same as before 1848; serfdom had been abolished in a merely formal sense.[116]

It is this overlapping of geography, class consciousness, and personal family myth that accounts for Handke's persistent reception of Ford's cinema. Given this constellation, Ford's world is not entirely different from the context of Handke's enthusiastic reception of medieval Romanesque architecture.[117] The latter's pilgrim-

111 Handke, *Weight of the World*, 8.
112 Handke, *Weight of the World*, 135.
113 Greiner, "'Ich komme aus dem Traum,'" interview with Peter Handke.
114 Handke, *Am Felsfenster morgens*, 320 and 218.
115 Peter Handke. *Repetition*, trans. Ralph Manheim (London: Methuen, 1988), 214.
116 Peter Handke. *A Sorrow Beyond Dreams: A Life Story*, trans. Ralph Manheim, with an introduction by Jeffrey Eugenides (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002), 9.
117 I have explored this topic in my book, *Romanisches Erzählen. Peter Handke und die epische Tradition* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2013).

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age to Romanesque churches and mountain cloisters can also be understood as an attempt at sublimation. The sense of an existential lack of origin is overcome by the appropriation of an architectural epoch whose remains seem to preserve the symbolic heritage of Handke's own ancestors. While Handke views the Gothic as "royal propaganda" – or architectural representation of the rulers – he is eager to transfigure the Romanesque era as his village home ("Dorfheimat"), in which the memory of his ancestors ("das Gedächtnis all der Unsern, der Vorfahren") is preserved.[118] Just as "country churchyards," like rural cinemas, convey to him an "idea of 'the people'," [119] the Romanesque sculptures found in village churches become a symbol of resistance to the rational modernity of metropolitan areas: preserved in them is the hope that "a completely different humanity"[120] may be possible.

Poets and Cowboys: Writing is an Adventure

It is typical of Peter Handke's appropriation of art forms and eras that his reception of John Ford's cinema does not follow a scholarly route; instead, it stems from the desire to identify with and receive validation from an artist he considers a teacher. In *Short Letter, Long Farewell,* the modeling of real life after Fordian aesthetics is illustrated towards the very end, when the protagonist catches himself blending with one of Ford's characters: "Expecting a story, we leaned forward a little; I realized that I was imitating the gesture of a character in one of his pictures who without shifting his position cranes his long neck over a dying man to see if he's still alive."[121]

One question, however, remains to be asked: Are we to imagine Peter Handke's male protagonists as heroes in the sense of the American Western? Just as in Ford's Westerns, where the future well-being of civilization is often based on the willingness of men to resist domestication by women, Handke's narrators also come across as lonely riders who excel in imagining cheerful togetherness, but still wake up alone in bed, like the writer protagonist in *Die morawische Nacht* (2008; *The Moravian Night*, 2016). In fact, Handke's *Versuch über den Pilznarren* (2013; *A Fool for Mushrooms. An Essay. A Story in Itself*) spells out the parallels between the isolated writer and the watchful sheriff:

> Yet another film came to mind before I headed over to my desk here. It was not the title, it was one of the opening scenes, if not *the* opening scene. It was (once again…) a West-

118 Handke, *Gestern unterwegs*, 87, 296.
119 Handke, *Weight of the World*, 208.
120 Handke, *Gestern unterwegs*, 540.
121 Handke, *Short Letter*, 167.

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> ern, by (you guessed it) John Ford, and at the beginning of the story, James Stewart, as the famous Sheriff Wyatt Earp – long after his now legendary Tombstone adventures, it seems – is sitting on the porch of his sheriff's office in the southern Texan? sun, idle and dreamy as only James Stewart can be, by all appearances peacefully and decisively letting nothing but time pass under the brim of a hat pulled halfway over his eyes, enviable and inspiring at the same time.[122]

This excerpt from *Versuch über den Pilznarren* refers to *Two Rode Together* (1961), a critical and commercial failure that Ford himself called "the worst piece of crap I've directed in twenty years."[123] As several journal entries indicate, Handke watched the film as early as 1976; he discusses Ford's cinematographic style, citing the famous five-minute, two-shot sequence from *Two Rode Together*, in which Richard Widmark and James Stewart sit by the river.[124] Stewart's character exhibits composure and calm determination throughout the film, along with organic belonging in the here and now, attentiveness, and the ability to be idle: Handke's characters constantly long for these qualities. Handke has often described this condition as "having time" – a sense of existential freedom (and thus individual authority) expressed in a particular gait, a certain gaze.[125] James Stewart embodies an almost "cosmic" agreement that also helps Handke's mushroom seeker find mushrooms where others would not – a quality that seems "downright derisive" to outsiders.[126] Like Handke's Don Juan, he is a "master of his own time."[127] By quoting the scene in which Stewart is seen sitting on the veranda of his sheriff's office, "idle and dreamy as only James Stewart can be," Handke mobilizes Ford's cinema for his critique of modernity's acceleration. As a master of his own time, Stewart personifies serenity, and it is precisely this serenity that places both the subject himself and the things around him in a special light. Having time provides the human being with heightened attention and awareness; a presence of mind – Handke calls it the "tired gaze" – with which he does justice to his environment:

> But then, otherwise it wouldn't be a Wild West story, the beginning of a new adventure, at first rather reluctantly and – do I remember correctly? – lured only by money, and headed northwards rather than westwards. Subsequently, however, and especially at the end of the story: the intuitive intervention, the gentle attention, the silently helpful

122 Peter Handke. *Versuch über den Pilznarren* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2013), 8-9.

123 John Ford, as quoted in Dan Ford. *Pappy: The Life of John Ford* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1998), 290. – Film critic R. M. Hodgens summed it up neatly when he claimed that the only element Ford had successfully developed in this film was "the rather tacky humor." R. M. Hodgens, review of *Two Rode Together*, by John Ford, *Film Quarterly* 15.1 (1961): 56.

124 Peter Handke, *Notizbuch, January 17–22, 1976*, Österreichisches Literaturarchiv (ÖLA SPH/LW/W9), 9 and 24.

125 See Carstensen, *Romanisches Erzählen*, 189-196.

126 Handke, *Versuch über den Pilznarren*, 49.

127 Handke, *Don Juan: His Own Version*, 33

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> presence of mind, as again only James Stewart radiated and continues to radiate it. Not only "Two Rode Together," according to the title of the film, where the second rider is Richard Widmark: more people rode together in the end, many, if not (almost) all.[128]

Handke's summary of Ford's *Two Rode Together* can be read as a metapoetic commentary on his own work. Each day, as he makes his way to his desk, the writer is faced with the challenges of a different kind of quest or conquest. Reluctantly at first, but soon embodying the "gentle attention" of a James Stewart, he embarks on his day's labor. Handke's protagonists treat writing as a "serious" adventure[129] that will allow them to imagine an alternative community, uniting the writer-cowboy, his characters, and his readers. As Handke puts it, more people will ride together in the end – many, if not all.

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128 Handke, *Versuch über den Pilznarren*, 9.

129 Handke, *Versuch über den Pilznarren*, 11.

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The Passion of Richard Schickel: What We Expect from War Films

War Stories

"The men on board dubbed it the 'Home Again Special,'" reported *Time* magazine in August 1944. It was a train taking 370 members of the 1st Marine Division across the United States to their families for a 30-day furlough. The reporter mused, "In another war there might have been brass bands at every stop. But in this pageantry-less, slogan-less war, the train just rumbled on toward New York, through the big towns and the whistle-stops."[1]

Samuel Goldwyn, one of Hollywood's movie moguls, imagined that the story of the Home Again Special might make a good script. Goldwyn was the producer of classics such as *Wuthering Heights*, *The Pride of the Yankees*, and, in 1946, *The Best Years of Our Lives*; this last film would be the cinematic adaptation of the *Time* magazine story. But why? Details about the soldiers suggested that they were slightly less than "Hollywood" – most were silent, pensive, and not at all like the action adventure heroes who typically populate war movies. When we think of such pictures, what comes to mind? Great battles fought with huge machines killing large swaths of soldiers, and a hero or heroes who emerge to elicit audience favor and provide the right kind of dramatic arc. But the *Time* magazine story did not, on the surface, have any of these dimensions.

In fact, it was clear that far from being heroic, the soldiers were scared, and not about the war – "I'm a little worried about how I'll look to them," one confessed, "about how much I've changed." Some didn't speak much at all, this to the chagrin of a reporter from the Pittsburgh *Sun-Telegraph*. He had boarded the train hoping to record war stories, but after two hours, he left mumbling, "I didn't get a thing." Another, when prodded about his heroism, retreated into modesty: "I had two machine guns, and I grabbed the guns a couple of times when my gunner got shot," Sgt. Al Goguen related. "But that was my job… God, I don't know how many Japs we got." To more than just a few soldiers, the real damage of the war was done on the Homefront. One recounted how while he was overseas, a buddy of his had received word that his girlfriend had gotten married. Because of this,

1 "The Way Home." *Time* 44 (August 7, 1944), 15.

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she asked him to send home all the pictures of her he had. He did, along with "a foot high" stack of pictures of other women collected from other soldiers.[2]
A month after this story appeared in *Time*, the magazine ran another, providing more evidence that the emerging story of the war was the integration of troops back into civilian life. On a 21-day furlough, Army Air Force pilots and crewmen attempted to enjoy themselves in Atlantic City. There they awaited reassignment, a prospect many found easier to handle than sitting on the boardwalk. "We don't need to be reoriented to the Army," one snapped. "A lot of us are damn glad to be going back overseas. What they should have prepared us for was the shock of coming home." Like other accounts, this one also included stories of romantic betrayal and broken marriages. An Army chaplain explained that many of the marriages had been of a certain kind – say I do before I die acts – but other relationships had been long-term; yet many were broken by the long months of war. The soldiers even had problems talking to their friends who had remained stateside: "When I got home Manhattan didn't seem real," one said. And when he began telling people what he had experienced, he explained "they didn't want to hear what men have to endure. They wanted dime-novel stories of adventure. They didn't understand what I was trying to say." "They hadn't seen it. It hadn't touched them."[3]

Hollywood Remembers

But it had touched Hollywood director William Wyler. Wyler was Jewish with a Swiss father and German mother. His mother's cousin was Carl Laemmle, the movie mogul who owned Universal Studios, and the person who brought Wyler to work for Universal in New York City. Wyler earned his stripes at Universal, slowly moving his way into directing throughout the 1920s and early 1930s. His most memorable films, though, emerged after he left Universal and began working with Samuel Goldwyn. It was Goldwyn who tapped Wyler to direct the *The Best Years of Our Lives*, the picture he wanted made about problems soldiers faced when they returned home.
Wyler had directed for Goldwyn before, (*Wuthering Heights*) but just as importantly, he had also served in the US Army, shooting war documentaries, including the harrowing 1944 Army Air Force film, *The Memphis Belle: A Story of a Flying Fortress*. His experience in the war represented one of the main reasons Hollywood evolved into something else after 1945. "The war was an escape to reality," Wyler explained. *The Best Years of Our Lives* "was the result of social forces at work when

2 "The Way Home." *Time* 44 (August 7, 1944), 15-16.
3 "Morale." *Time* 44 (September 11, 1944), 65-66.

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the war ended. In a sense, it was written by events and imposed a responsibility on us to be true to these events and refrain from distorting them to our own ends."[4] Consider how Wyler described the relationship between his movie and history – he believed that the war compelled Hollywood to get real about its social obligation to its audiences. Of course, such intentions still had to operate within the "Dream Factory" that just as often made reality into a fairytale.

And yet, Goldwyn, Wyler, and Robert Sherwood, the Pulitzer Prize-winning author who wrote the screenplay, depicted perhaps the toughest and yet most universal of all war stories – the transition from combat to civilian life. *The Best Years of Our Lives* traces the return of three soldiers to their respective families. Each man deals with his own specific problem that, in light of the articles that inspired the film, were fairly common in postwar America. As with many Hollywood movies, the characters represent far more in a single person than would be realistically possible, but they also provide somebody for everybody in the audience to relate to. For example, a young bombardier captain returns to his wife and his somewhat pathetic life as a soda jerk, only to slowly realize that she has left him for another man. He is emotionally crushed by the thought of washing glasses all day long. The character that attracted the most attention, though, was the one played by the only non-professional in the cast. Harold Russell, a real-life soldier who had lost his hands in a real-life battle, played a disabled vet who returns to his cute blonde girlfriend filled with the type of dread that many soldiers felt – will she understand me? He wonders. Will she accept me? Russell was honored by the Academy for his performance, both, it seems likely, for his authenticity and for giving a voice to a dilemma understood by millions of Americans.

Critics Weigh in

The film premiered the week before Thanksgiving in 1946. An auspicious time, present-day critic Francis Davis notes, for it was "a year when many families were mourning their losses as they sat down to count their blessings." The film was an immediate success with both audiences and critics. It grossed more in its first run than any other movie except *Gone With the Wind*, at that point the reigning all-time box-office champion. It garnered an astonishing array of awards, including seven Oscars, two Golden Globes, and was named best picture of the year by the Academy, the New York Film Critics Circle, and the Golden Globe journalists. *Time* announced it was a "big, shiny, star-studded show that should appeal to practically anyone who can be lured inside a movie theater." It cost a relatively

4 As quoted in Philip D. Beidler. "Remembering the Best Years of Our Lives." *Virginia Quarterly Review* 72.4 (1996), 4.

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high $3 million to make, but clearly earned its weight back in gold statuettes alone. The review in *Time* summed up the general reaction to the film: "Like most good mass entertainments, this picture has occasional moments of knowing hokum; but unlike most sure-fire movies, it was put together with good taste, honesty, wit – even a strong suggestion of guts." [5]

Shortly after the war ended, a new film journal entitled *Hollywood Quarterly* editorialized, "One of the first casualties of the conflict was the 'pure entertainment' myth, which had served to camouflage the social irresponsibility and creative impotence of much of the material presented on the screen and over the air."[6] For Wyler and the generation who served in and survived the war, Hollywood could not remain merely a dream factory. That notion might sound anachronistic, considering that we assume war movies made before the 1960s (and certainly before Vietnam), are one-dimensional. But did Hollywood trade one kind of approach to war films for another? In other words, the skepticism and cynicism that pervades later films such as *The Deer Hunter* or *Coming Home* might be seen as a reaction to the intentions driving *The Best Years of Our Lives*. And yet, both eras responded to the cultural conditions of their audiences and filmmakers. While Wyler's film was not meant as a correction, nor was it the typical John Wayne vehicle or a pat, buddy movie with equal parts comedy, tragedy, and hollow heroics. Still, it was a quintessentially Hollywood war movie: it was made by one of industry's moguls, it starred a few big-name male and female actors, was filmed at the end of the Second World War (and was therefore was very timely), and was directed by someone who had seen combat. Perhaps from our perspective today, the simple structure and nature of the film strikes us as naïve, the film does not reflect the jaded, cynical successors that we have come to accept as the standard. But should we find grave faults with it?

In 1946, Robert Warshow, a critic of a caliber almost unmatched in his day, leveled a devastating critique of *The Best Years of Our Lives*. Warshow was an erudite and happily elitist. His criticism clearly influenced later critics who were primed to see war movies as one of Hollywood's social sins. In his review of *The Best Years of Our Lives*, Warshow snipped, "the falsehood [of the film] has many aspects, but its chief and most general aspect is a denial of the reality of politics, if politics means the existence of real incompatibilities of interest and real *social* problems not susceptible of individual solutions." The movie, in other words, was a moral failure.[7]

5 Francis Davis. "Storming the Home Front." *Atlantic Monthly* 291.2 (2003), 125; "New Picture." *Time* 48 (November 25, 1946), 103.

6 "Editorial Statement." *Hollywood Quarterly* 1.1 (1945), vii.

7 Robert Warshow. "The Anatomy of Falsehood," in *The Immediate Experience: Movie, Comics, Theatre and other Aspects of Popular Culture, ed. by Robert Warshow* (New York: Atheneum, 1975), 158.

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It strikes me as more than a bit disingenuous to expect war movies to lay bare the emotional and even political tumult that the soldiers themselves found difficult to comprehend. Acknowledging the line that Hollywood films straddled between entertainment and art, critic James Agee wrote a two-part essay on *The Best Years of Our Lives* for the political magazine *The Nation* in 1946. In a review that in its totality was a mixture of abject disappointment and genuine pleasure, Agee, more than any other critic, captured what was so troubling about the film. Agee was no lightweight; his intelligent writing elevated movie criticism to a level of respectability. Agee wrote, "At its worst this story is very annoying in its patness, its timidity, its slithering attempts to pretend to face and by that pretense to dodge in the most shameful way possible its own fullest meanings and possibilities." However, he relished the notion that "this is one of very few American studio-made movies in years that seem to me profoundly pleasing, moving, and encouraging."[8] Unlike Warshow, Agee wrote for popular outlets as well as specialized journals – he was one of the main film critics for *Time Magazine* as well as for the *Nation*. And unlike later critics, Agee could not assume that his film criticism mattered. In fact, he and Warshow were part of a generation of truly outstanding writers who devoted considerable and sustained attention to the roles movies played in defining American cultural history.

Schickel Remembers

Richard Schickel was a beneficiary of those earlier critics. As a critic for *Time* from 1965-2010, Schicklel held a position of authority in the world of film criticism that was nearly unmatched in terms of influence (opinion-shaping) and access. He came of age as a critic when his profession had gained full legitimacy because there was a huge audience ready to listen to what critics like him had to say. Therefore, it is with great interest that we should consider Schickel's dismantling of Hollywood war films, especially *The Best Years of Our Lives*. In his book, *Good Morning Mr. Zip Zip Zip*, Richard Schickel refers to that film as the "last great wartime lie, a fantasia of good feelings…eerily out of touch with human reality." For most of his book, which is a strange hybrid of memoir and film history, Schickel tackles what he believes is that great lie: that Hollywood helped perpetuate an alternate reality "covered in silence, duplicity, [and] misdirection." He relates with obvious exasperation, "During World War II, in the midst of my burgeoning life [Schickel was eight years old in 1941], I was surrounded – as we all were – by death on a scale unprecedented in human history. Yet it was constantly lied about.

8 James Agee. "What Hollywood Can Do," *Nation*, 7 and 14 December 1946, in *Agee on Film: Reviews and Comments* (New York: Beacon Press, 1966), 229-231. 229, 230.

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In the movies particularly, tragedy was almost always subsumed in triumphalism, mortality in broadly hinted at suggestion of heroic immortality." And while his memory of being duped clearly infuriates Schickel, the reason his ire has yet to recede is because, he explains, "This is a lie that has returned, revitalized, in the 'greatest generation' fantasy."[9]

Schickel wanted his book to expose and undermine the lies and myths cooked up by Hollywood; lies that were part of official American propaganda during the war and grew into prevailing opinion following it. Thus, it follows that *The Best Years of Our Lives* was a feel-good movie that, Schickel argues, was probably needed by adults in 1946. "But," he declares, "I didn't. In fact," he snaps, "the comfortable – not to say semi-comatose – world of *The Best Years of Our Lives* was exactly the world I wanted to escape." For Schickel, and one assumes he thinks for millions of people like him, the fiction of Hollywood's America had consumed all understanding of the real America. In a remarkable statement about historical memory, Schickel announces, "If we cannot remember truthfully, we cannot think clearly or behave decently. That is one important thing a critic…tries to do: recall honestly, so as to measure new experience in such light as memory can shed on the case…It is," he closes, "all I have to offer." While many people who live through great historical events invest faith in their own memory, what makes Schickel's remembering actually a bit dangerous is that he expects too much from movies and memory.[10]

After reading *Good Morning, Mr. Zip, Zip, Zip* I felt it imperative to address the passion of Richard Schickel – or his quest to redeem us all by condemning Hollywood's version of America at war. The tragedy, he exclaims, is that the government and Hollywood "deliberately distorted much of what they put forth in those days in order to keep us bent pliantly to their will." Schickel goes on to confess that he "became…a critic…out of some dimly felt desire to help set this errant record straight." To advance his mission, he rented a few dozen World War II vintage movies and wrote his reactions to them into what becomes a reviled past. Yet, what is most puzzling about Schickel's approach is not his desire to seek the truth but his absolute certainty that memory and criticism can uncover it. In a rather ahistorical comment, Schickel contends that because his generation is dying off, the war period will "belong exclusively to the historians, trying to recreate the living texture of the time out of dry documents, [and] fading photographs." Gone will be the people such as Schickel who "can remember the war," and while there

9 Richard Schickel. *Good Morning, Mr. Zip Zip Zip: Movies, Memory, and World War II* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003), 270, xiv, xv.

10 Schickel, *Good Morning, Mr. Zip Zip Zip*, 272, 303-304.

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is still time, who will be able "to debate its conduct and its meaning." It is up to his generation, he closes, "to get straight about it."[11]

The War on Film

How do we know when we have "gotten it straight"? If Hollywood poses problems for those who, like Schickel, lived through the war, one would imagine that documentaries are the obvious answer. Indeed, I had the chance to watch the making of *The Perilous Fight: America's World War II in Color*, a documentary that is stunning because it *looks* like film footage from America's other filmed war, Vietnam.[12] The documentary was made by a team of accomplished filmmakers who used the expertise of historians and journalists to verify the authenticity of the story and footage. The filmmakers had an audacious goal to use color footage to create a narrative rather than look for film to tell a story already written. In other words, the six hours of documentary film drive the story. It is as close to memory as history as we are likely to get because the film is basically shards of memory stitched together to make an historical argument. And yet, as much as I think Schickel would have liked this approach because it relies on firsthand accounts, the filmmakers still had to make significant choices.

For example, by relying only on color footage, the filmmakers placed limits on what they could use and what audiences would see. Some events, including Pearl Harbor and the Battle of the Bulge, do not actually appear in the film – there were no cameras capturing the Japanese raid on the American base in Hawaii in color. And some film footage was just as sentimental as anything captured by Hollywood. Consider a five-minute sequence about the 1945 battle for Okinawa as just one instance. In what, to me, is among the most heart-wrenching chapters of the film, the filmmakers used the terribly intimate bloody battle for this island base to recount the story of William Belcher, an American soldier from Indiana who died clearing out one of the many caves on Okinawa. These caves, the sequence begins, harbored both civilians as well as soldiers, and the Americans sent to root out the enemy also encountered a terrified, wounded, and sorely maltreated population.

Unlike the characters in *The Best Years of Our Lives*, William Belcher did not return home. But the film's portrayal of Belcher, and the music and narration that surrounds it, seems very similar – sentimental and sympathetic – to Hollywood's composite. The film jumps from scenes on Okinawa to home films of Belcher and

11 Schickel, *Good Morning, Mr. Zip Zip Zip*, xvii, 302.

12 *The Perilous Fight: America's World War II in Color*, Martin Smith, producer (USA, 2003).

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his wife getting married and raising their two sons, while a voiceover reads a letter Belcher wrote home. It begins:

> This is a letter that I want your mother to save for you until you are older if perchance I never return. Death is not an easy thing for anyone to understand but every life shall one day end and should that day come for me before I can return to live with you remember that only the body can be taken and I will still be. You both shall know your father better as you grow and know yourself better. I can never be dead, because you are alive.[13]

Belcher's letter, and the construction of the scene around it, quite deliberately evokes emotion and sentimentalism as sure as any Hollywood movie. But because Belcher was not yet jaded and cynical, did the filmmakers fail their audience? Can we get a simple message from his death? While Schickel indicts Hollywood for not merely creating a false past but knowingly perpetuating myths that served to cover-up the truth, with a capital "T," I wonder whether Schickel's indictment of Hollywood films doesn't rest on an impossible charge: to capture the meaning of the war. Like the ambiguity that complicates recounting the history of the war, the history of moviemaking during the war is a good deal muddier than Schickel would have us believe.

Cinematic History of the War

Thomas Doherty, a film historian with a distinguished publishing record, deals with the matter of World War II movies and American culture in his 1993 book *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II*. Doherty suggests that "from the vantage of half a century, the film record of 1941-45 is condescended to as quaint or condemned as duplicitous. The technique seems hopelessly antiquated, the sensibility laughably naïve."[14] Indeed, Doherty supports Schickel's gut reaction. I agree that when compared to films such as Steven Spielberg's *Saving Private Ryan* or Terrence Malick's *The Thin Red Line* (much less all the Vietnam movies), Hollywood films made during the Second World War seem outmatched technologically and, therefore, we think they are outmatched dramatically as well. However, quite apart from the undisciplined memories like Schickel's, Doherty explains that wartime Hollywood did not belittle the experience of war or willfully create the kind of meta-myth that Schickel condemns.

13 Letter from William Forbes Belcher to His Sons, February 14, 1945, William Forbes Belcher Papers, 1945, SC2353, Indiana Historical Society.

14 Thomas Doherty. *Projections of War: Hollywood, American Culture, and World War II* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), 2, 11.

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Of the many movies that might illustrate this point, Doherty points to one that quite directly addresses the context of Schickel's argument. In 1944, Hollywood scored with a movie called *I'll Be Seeing You* – a title that touchingly echoed one of the period's most melancholy tunes. In a pivotal scene of the film, a burned-out combat veteran (again on leave), played by Joseph Cotten, goes to a picture show with his girlfriend, played by Ginger Rogers. In the movie, the two sit through a typical flag-waving screen spectacle, one that was made to boost morale and instill patriotism – the kind of movie that Schickel deplores but also holds up as monolithic. After leaving the theater, Rogers turns to Cotten and asks if the "war was really like that?" The couple stops and Cotten begins a monologue that is neither inspirational nor cynical, it is simply delivered without emotion:

> It's just a difference in size. To a guy that's in it, the war's about ten feet wide and…kind of empty. It's you and…a couple of fellows in your company maybe, maybe a couple of Japs. It's all kind of mixed up, uh, sometimes it's…all full of noise and sometimes it's quiet. It all depends on what you're thinking about I guess. It depends on how scared you are, how cold you are, and how wet you are. I guess if you asked a hundred guys what the war is like, they'd all give you a different answer.

Sound like fiction? A meta-myth? A lie? This movie rebutted Schickel's argument sixty years before he made it. One thing that Hollywood could not fake, furthermore, was immediacy of war for the movie industry. "Unlike Vietnam," Doherty explains, "this war reached into boardrooms and penetrated the highest executive levels…Joseph I. Breen, the power behind the Production Code Administration [the organization that had infamously browbeaten the industry into sanitizing its product] had three sons serving overseas. During the same week in 1944, Breen received two telegrams, one son had been wounded in Normandy, another had lost a leg on Guam."[15]

Schickel can be disappointed with mainstream Hollywood if he finds it nefarious that that Hollywood colluded with Washington to prevent reminders of war's brutality from reaching the nation's movie theaters. Yet any historian who plumbed the archives and read magazines – trade and popular – would also have to concede that, as Doherty suggests, "whether overseas or on the homefront, American audiences knew what Hollywood was about and Hollywood knew that they knew."

Perhaps the clearest illustration of this implicit understanding was audience reaction to non-fiction films during the war. Doherty recounts the reactions audiences had to two different cinematic depictions of war's brutality. In the Hollywood movie *Air Force*, which came out in 1943, audiences laughed and applauded when Japanese Zeros were shot out of the sky. However, when people witnessed real war footage of flamethrowers eviscerating Japanese soldiers in pillboxes and caves the

15 Doherty, *Projections of War*, 12, 14.

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audience sat "silent and grim." The public was sophisticated enough to grapple with the disconnect between Hollywood fiction and the war's reality, even if a young Richard Schickel was not.[16]

Newsreels and combat reports played in two-thirds of the 16,800 theaters in the United States. Throughout the war, they brought as many people into theaters as A-list features; and by 1944, over eighty percent of newsreel footage was about the war. Hungry for information – especially pictures – about the fighting, audiences forced the movie industry and the government to change their policies regarding war footage. In September 1943, the US government officially permitted "newsreels to record the realistic 'albeit harrowing' side of war, including images of American dead in battle." Schickel reserves special condemnation for the film industry's failure– and therefore a generation's failure – to face the enormity of the Holocaust. Here too, Schickel's memory fails him. While it is clear that FDR's administration willfully disregarded the magnitude of the Holocaust, even with this dreadful cover-up– among the worst of the war– images from liberated death camps did reach audiences. In April 1945, the newsreel Nazi Atrocities appeared in movie theaters. This initial view of the Holocaust was quickly followed a month later by Army Signal Corps footage of the liberation of four Nazi concentration camps. Ed Herily, the voice of Universal Newsreel, admonished the audience, "Don't turn away! Look!" One wonders if Richard Schickel did.[17]

Problems with Memory

Schickel wants his book to be seen as an impassioned rejection of the myth that World War II was fought by good simple men for the betterment of a troubled but redeemable world. "Most of us no longer believe in that myth," he says. "When we encounter it, usually in a late-night television rerun of some old war movie, we laugh and shake our heads at the naivete." Schickel is saving us by disavowing saving himself of the deception now mass marketed as the Greatest Generation. In returning to his youth, and the origins of this lie, he hopes to understand and then erase the fact that, he "surrendered a great deal of [his] imaginative self, more than a half-century ago, to the movies, the most immediate and potent – though certainly not the most subtle– narrative instrument our society has yet created." Yet has Schickel not perpetrated the same crime of memory he accuses Hollywood of committing? He condemns Hollywood for deceiving boys like him into believing, as he says of Robert Sherwood's script, "that American life was now mainly a question of minor behavioral adjustments within the framework provided by [overly

16 Doherty, *Projections of War*, 228.

17 Doherty, *Projections of War*, 228, 239, 247.

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optimistic] values." But in place of falsehood, Schickel substitutes a cynicism that buckles under scrutiny. In the end, it is not the movies that failed Schickel or Americans in general, but his own memory, conflated into truth and history.[18]

Far from the last great lie of Hollywood's war, *The Best Years of Our Lives* might be reasonably seen as the last great war film before nostalgia and then cynicism made irony and suspicion the only authentic response to the war. It is undoubtedly the case that as we moved further away from the Second World War, we as a society have allowed nostalgia to inform our celebration of the generation that fought that war as much as cold reason. Yet, are movies to blame for such a development? What can we reasonably expect from movies? I don't ask that question flippantly so we – the filmgoing audience – avoid parsing out why some war movies are good and some are not. Those that are vacuous are fairly easy to identify and dismiss. Yet, movies such as *The Best Years of Our Lives* remain significant because they persist as war movies of particular kind. They teeter on the edge of profundity and profanity – trapped between being smart observations on the tragedy of war and commercial products that sell movie tickets and popcorn. But these complicated movies are not, collectively, a lie. They can't be, because we, the audience, accept them for what they are, movies – not the Truth.

So, in the end who is to blame for the lies that Schickel identifies and denounces? Was it the so-called Greatest Generation or the children of that generation who preferred to accept the fantasy world of late-night TV rather than understand what their parents had lived through? Remember the lack of hubris among the returning soldiers; compare it to the sarcasm of Schickel – it seems he is unable to mention the title *The Best Years of Our Lives* without an ironic sneer that says to anyone listening that Hollywood can't fool Richard Schickel any longer. Such a reaction does a disservice not merely to the history of the war years, but to the filmmakers who approached this film with sincerity, not piety, in an effort to capture the myriad of emotions felt by the generation that crowded into theaters in the winter of 1946. That generation frankly didn't need to add irony to their war experience, they were happy just to survive it.

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Nicholas K. Johnson

"A classroom history lesson is not going to work": HBO's *Conspiracy* and Depicting Holocaust Perpetrators on Film

> The historical record needs to be read; it is not enough for a few scholars to know and understand – if history is not recreated for each generation it might as well be forgotten and its lessons left unlearned.
> Frank Pierson, 1998[1]

In 2001, HBO and the BBC aired *Conspiracy*, a dramatization of the infamous Wannsee Conference.[2] The conference, organized by Reinhard Heydrich and Adolf Eichmann, took place in Berlin on 20 January 1942 and was intended to bring various strands of the Third Reich government under the leadership of the SS in order to coordinate the so-called Final Solution. The surviving Wannsee Protocol[3] stands as one of the most compelling pieces of evidence for the Third Reich's genocidal intent and is emblematic of the shift from mass shootings in the occupied East to industrial-scale murder.[4] The conference was not the event where "the decision" about the Holocaust was made, contrary to popular imagination.[5] *Conspiracy*, written by Loring Mandel and directed by Frank Pierson, is an unusual historical film because it reenacts the Wannsee Conference in real time and is devoid of the clichés prevalent throughout Holocaust films. It also engages

1 Frank Pierson. Letter to Stanley Scheinbaum, September 30, 1998, Box 11, Folder 4, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 2.

2 This piece is based on my 2016 MA thesis: Nicholas K. Johnson. "HBO and the Holocaust: *Conspiracy*, the Historical Film, and Public History at Wannsee" (Master's Thesis, Indiana University, Indianapolis, 2016).

3 The protocol is not a verbatim transcript of the meeting, but rather a summary written in a euphemistic, bureaucratic language in order to mask the meeting's true purpose.

4 Mark Roseman, *The Villa, The Lake, The Meeting: Wannsee and the Final Solution* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 106-107.

5 *Conspiracy* is not innocent of spreading this erroneous view of the Wannsee Conference. Although the film itself makes no such claim, HBO's promotional material for it certainly did, with the taglines "One of The Greatest Crimes Against Humanity Was Perpetrated in Just Over an Hour" and "One Meeting. Six Million Lives." – See IMDb. "Conspiracy," URL: https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0266425/taglines (accessed November 12, 2019). For more on misconceptions reinforced by *Conspiracy*, see Stefanie Rauch. "Understanding the Holocaust through Film: Audience Reception between Preconceptions and Media Effects," *History & Memory* 30.1 (2018): 151-188.

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with historiographical arguments and makes a few of its own. *Conspiracy* is part of a subset of Holocaust films which have an "explicitly educative or consciousness-raising agenda, or which consciously engage with academic historical interpretation of the Holocaust."[6] This essay uses the production history of *Conspiracy* as a case study for how filmmakers can make difficult histories accessible to wide audiences. Due to the nature of film distribution, particularly in the digital age, filmmakers can reach much larger audiences than historians or museum curators (with very few exceptions).

Grounded in archival sources from the Loring Mandel Collection such as script drafts, production notes, HBO meeting minutes, and correspondence, this essay analyzes *Conspiracy* on all three levels introduced by Robert Toplin.[7] In his article "Cinematic History: Where Do We Go From Here?", Toplin argues that most historians only engage with individual films as texts; that is, they watch the film and then write about it. Some historians go further and will touch on a film's historical context and the background of its creators. However, Toplin's third level of analysis is much rarer and guides my own research into *Conspiracy*:

> Only a few historians, though, are taking the analysis of film to a third and still deeper level. Investigations of this nature may examine the production histories behind the movies. They can extend the range of primary sources to include a wide assortment associated with the crafting of a motion picture. In this case historians can examine film treatments (story narratives and descriptions), inter-office memos from studios and production companies, letters between individuals involved in production, drafts of the script, and other materials. Analyses at this third level often include original interviews with principal artists and business managers involved in a production. The scholarship may feature evidence drawn from conversations with the cinematographer, writer, director, producer, or studio executive.[8]

6 Barry Langford. "Mass Culture/Mass Media/Mass Death: Teaching Film, Television, and the Holocaust," in *Teaching Holocaust Literature and Film*, ed. by Robert Eaglestone and Barry Langford (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008). 64.

7 The Loring Mandel Collection at the Wisconsin Center for Theater and Film Research mostly contains Mandel's personal files spanning his entire career in radio, film, and television. The section devoted to *Conspiracy* contains correspondence, his own personal notes, scans of primary and secondary sources, and script drafts. The bulk of these script drafts are for *Conspiracy*, but the collection also includes multiple drafts for *Complicity* as well as drafts that combine both films into a three-hour epic. Some drafts are fresh printouts from Mandel's word processor, others contain copious handwritten notes and emendations. Almost all drafts contain footnotes and bibliographies – with the exception of the shooting scripts.

8 See Robert Brent Toplin. "Cinematic History: Where Do We Go From Here?," *The Public Historian* 25.3 (2003): 86-87. – In this piece, Toplin categorizes three levels of historical film analysis: 1. A film as a primary source. 2. The film's historical context, background, and reception. 3. A production history of the film in question, based on archival research (scripts, memos, correspondence) and interviews.

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Furthermore, my focus on the Loring Mandel collection and the *Conspiracy* screenplay furthers Bruno Ramirez's argument for the screenwriting process as the most important step in creating historical films.[9] It is through the script archive that one can see how *Conspiracy* was conceived, its source base, what sorts of historiographical arguments it referred and responded to, and how the film serves as an example of responsibly "doing history" in a way that largely – no film, book, or exhibit is flawless – fulfills the goals of public history. One of the advantages of this approach is that it allows us to see what the filmmakers' intent was, what their particular viewpoint on history was, and how they conducted research and factchecking. It is one thing for a historian to view a historical drama and speculate about what the filmmakers meant to say. It is quite another to have documentary evidence of intent, bibliographies about the depicted historical events, and detailed examples of primary sources, fact checking, and argument between the consulted historians and the filmmakers – without the usual spin, simplification, and advertising language bound up in a particular film's promotional material like trailers, press kits, and pre-air interviews.[10] It is important to note that this type of source material is exceedingly rare as scripts usually belong to film studios and correspondence and production memos usually do not survive long enough to make it into archival collections. However, several recent studies have fruitfully utilized screenplay archives.[11] Before analyzing this production material, it is important to discuss the particular problems associated with depicting the Holocaust on film.

The Holocaust and Film

How can one explain the "unexplainable?" This is the central challenge for filmmakers depicting the Holocaust. Holocaust films at their best make the crime immediate, unsettle audiences, and go beyond mere costume drama. Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel has argued that film's range of expressive possibilities exceeds that of the written text, but cautions us about the dangers of misrepresentation and exploitation that can only be amplified by film, a more accessible medium.[12] Other survivors have suggested film as a means of communicating the experience of the Holocaust to future generations. In his memoir, *Literature or Life*, the Buch-

9 See Bruno Ramirez, *Inside the Historical Film* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).

10 Note the misleading language in *Conspiracy's* promotional material.

11 Two recent examples are Nicholas Evan Sarantakes. *Making Patton: A Classic War Film's Epic Journey to the Silver Screen* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2012), and Earl J. Hess and Pratibha A. Dabholkar. *Singin' in the Rain: The Making of an American Masterpiece* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009).

12 Elie Wiesel. "Foreword," in Anette Insdorf. *Indelible Shadows. Film and the Holocaust* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), xi.

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enwald survivor Jorge Semprún discussed the potential of film for communicating the experience of the camps to the rest of humanity. He recounts one survivor, a professor, discussing how to depict the Holocaust in art:

> 'The cinema would seem to be the most appropriate art form,' he adds. 'But there certainly won't be many film documents. And the most significant events of camp life have surely never been filmed…. In any case, the documentary has its limitations, insuperable ones…. A work of fiction, then – but who would dare? The best thing would be to produce a film right now, in the still visible truth of Buchenwald…with death still clearly present. Not a documentary, a work of fiction – I really mean that. It's unthinkable….'[13]

Others, most notably the French documentarian Claude Lanzmann, famous for *Shoah* (1985), have argued against the fictional representation of the Holocaust. Lanzmann's most visible critique occurred in 1994, when he argued that *Schindler's List* was beyond the pale due to "trivializing the Holocaust" and that dramatically portraying the Holocaust was a "betrayal."[14] Many scholars and commentators associate Lanzmann with a "prohibition on representation" (*Darstellungsverbot*) that places all fictionalized (or re-created) filmic depictions of the Holocaust beyond the acceptable boundaries of appropriateness or taste, as doing so would harm the "uniqueness of the Holocaust."[15] Some critics have alleged that Lanzmann was engaging in self-promotion by arguing that *his* documentary style was the only acceptable method of portraying the Holocaust.[16] Most studies of the Holocaust and film tend to hold up Lanzmann as advocating an extreme position, vehemently rejecting any attempts at portraying the Holocaust dramatically. However, Lanzmann has recently amended his position, praising the 2015 Hungarian Auschwitz drama *Son of Saul*, as well as by collaborating with Steven Spielberg.[17] In critical literature, Lanzmann has often served as an avatar for one side of what film historian Catrin Corell has identified as a debate between "mimesis and prohibition of images" that has existed since the end of the Second World War.[18] This debate over film echoes Theodor Adorno's oft-misquoted aphorism "To write a

13 Jorge Semprun. *Literature or Life* (New York: Viking Adult, 1997), 126-127.

14 Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows*, 259.

15 Waltraud Wende. "Medienbilder und Geschichte – Zur Medialisierung des Holocaust," in *Geschichte im Film: mediale Inszenierungen des Holocaust und kulturelles Gedächtnis*, ed. by Waltraud Wende (Stuttgart: Metzler, 2002), 12-13.

16 Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows*, 259.

17 Jordan Cronk. "'Shoah' Filmmaker Claude Lanzmann Talks Spielberg, 'Son of Saul,'" *The Hollywood Reporter*, 2 May 2016, URL: http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/shoah-filmmaker-claude-lanzmann-talks-869931 (accessed November 12, 2019).

18 Catrin Corell. *Der Holocaust als Herausforderung für den Film: Formen des filmischen Umgangs mit der Shoah seit 1945: eine Wirkungstypologie* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2009), 15.

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poem after Auschwitz is barbaric."[19] Historian Waltraud Wende has characterized both Wiesel and Lanzmann as embodying the "prohibition on representation" school of thought, which is complicated by the fact that Wiesel contributed the foreword to Annette Insdorf's *Indelible Shadows: Film and the Holocaust*. Wende however has astutely pointed out that any sort of standard that bans the representation of the Holocaust on film is logically inconsistent unless one advocates banning the depiction of all sorts of historical periods including the American West.[20] Other scholars have critiqued Holocaust film from the opposite stance. Aaron Kerner has argued against an "authenticity" fetish on the part of both filmmakers and historians. For Kerner, "authenticity is a red herring" due to the inherently constructed nature of film.[21] Furthermore, historians' evaluations and critiques of films based solely on "authenticity" quickly become predictable and of little use for further analysis. The debate is important because it is the context in which *Conspiracy* was produced. The film succeeds in examining the Holocaust from a detached point of view that avoids depicting physical violence in any form. In doing so, it evades controversy by instead drawing attention to how the Holocaust unfolded – from the Nazi point of view. In this way, *Conspiracy* acts as "translator" of history, or an "intermediary between the past and present."[22]

There is an imperative on the part of filmmakers and historians specializing in the Holocaust to make this difficult history accessible and understandable. In a 1994 article for *Die Zeit*, discussing *Schindler's List,* in which he called for "images instead of footnotes," the German historian Wolfgang Benz powerfully articulated this imperative:

> Documentaries cannot depict the destruction of human beings through fear of death, the perpetrators' lust for murder, the moral ambivalence in a chaotic time and under existential threat. In order to make what happened comprehensible, the literary and dramatic form is needed.[23]

Similarly, Catrin Corell has argued that *Erfahrbarmachung*, or "experience-able-making" is the "central difficulty" of depicting the "unrepresentable" reality

19 This misquotation stems from a longer sentence: "Kulturkritik findet sich der letzten Stufe der Dialektik von Kultur und Barbarei gegenüber: nach Auschwitz ein Gedicht zu schreiben, ist barbarisch, und das frisst auch die Erkenntnis an, die ausspricht, warum es unmöglich ward, heute Gedichte zu schreiben." – Theodor W. Adorno. *Gesammelte Schriften,* Band 10.1: Kulturkritik und Gesellschaft I, Prismen. Ohne Leitbild (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1977), 30.

20 Wende, "Medienbilder und Geschichte – Zur Medialisierung des Holocaust," 12, 14.

21 Aaron Kerner. *Film and the Holocaust: New Perspectives on Dramas, Documentaries, and Experimental Films* (New York: Continuum, 2011), 15.

22 Wende, "Medienbilder und Geschichte - Zur Medialisierung des Holocaust," 9.

23 Wolfgang Benz. "Wie authentisch muß der Bericht über ein geschichtliches Ereignis sein? Anmerkungen eines Historikers zu „Schindlers Liste": Bilder statt Fußnoten," *Die Zeit*, March 4, 1994, URL: http://www.zeit.de/1994/10/bilder-statt-fussnoten (accessed November 12, 2019).

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of the Holocaust. For her, film is the "central form of the memory of the Holocaust."[24] Annette Insdorf echoes this sentiment – and the arguments of film historians like Robert Rosenstone and Anton Kaes, as well as Roy Rosenzweig and David Thelen's landmark study *The Presence of the Past* – when she notes that Holocaust films are the primary means by which the public learns about the Holocaust; they make this historical event more accessible.[25] It is important to restate here that none of these authors or filmmakers are naïve about the inherent problems associated with film as a commercial enterprise. All of the above-mentioned authors discuss financial concerns and take them seriously. For example, Aaron Kerner notes the difficulties in reconciling the need for commercial breaks in NBC's 1978 miniseries *Holocaust* with the subject matter, but his argument falters with his claim that all of television is hampered by this intimate connection between production and corporate sponsorship.[26] This outdated critique, or stereotype, of television is a common trope among scholars and critics who fundamentally ignore the (initially American, but now global) cultural shift towards difficult, complex dramas on cable (or streaming) networks that rely on subscriptions instead of advertising revenue.[27] *Conspiracy* is also a historical artifact, a snapshot of HBO programming during the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. HBO continues to produce historical dramas, but has recently shifted towards more blockbuster-style, special effects-driven series.

Television has fundamentally changed the landscape of the historical film. Television is more accessible than theatrical film; its lower budgets also permitted a wider range of possible productions, especially on networks like HBO that do not rely on advertising. The Second World War has been a staple since the early days of television. Dramatic or comedic series like ABC's *Combat!* or CBS' *Hogan's Heroes*[28] were popular during the 1960s, and the 1970s saw groundbreaking documentaries like ITV's *The World at War* and serious dramas like NBC's *Holocaust*. The West German television landscape saw an upswing in both dramas and documentaries about the Second World War and the Holocaust during the 1970s and 1980s. During this period, television "popularized the task of [coming to terms with the past]."[29] With the advent of long-form cable dramas on HBO like *Oz*

24 Corell, *Der Holocaust als Herausforderung für den Film*, 17.

25 Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows,* xvii.

26 Kerner, *Film and the Holocaust,* 29.

27 For HBO's role in the changing television landscape, see *The Essential HBO Reader* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), and Dean J. DeFino. *The HBO Effect* (New York, London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2013). For more on recent cable television and the (serial) historical drama, see Chapter 2 of Alison Landsberg's *Engaging the Past: Mass Culture and the Production of Historical Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015).

28 Known as *Ein Käfig voller Helden* in Germany.

29 Wulf Kansteiner. *In Pursuit of German Memory: History, Television, and Politics After Auschwitz* (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2006), 111.

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and *The Sopranos* during the 1990s, networks like HBO became able to attract larger audiences. In other words, this new style of cable drama primed audiences for more "difficult" productions, including thought-provoking historical dramas. These are not "TV movies" in the traditional – and sometimes pejorative – sense of the term, which means something inferior to theatrical releases due to lower budgets, network restrictions, and the like.[30] Historians have analyzed historical cable television dramas like *Deadwood* and argued for them as works of historical interpretation that can compete or stand alongside traditional, physical public history sites such as museums.[31] Historian Alison Landsberg has analyzed series like *Mad Men*, *Rome*, and *Deadwood* and dubbed them "historically conscious television dramas," arguing that long-form television has distinct advantages over theatrical films for depicting history.[32] While *Conspiracy* is a 90-minute movie, it also benefits from some of the same factors that give long-form cable drama a distinct advantage over the theatrically-released film.

This focus on accessibility and on making a difficult history comprehensible for international publics that did not experience the Second World War firsthand places trends in Holocaust film directly in line with trends in the public history movement. Public history is similarly invested in making difficult histories accessible to wide audiences. Both Anton Kaes and Annette Insdorf have borrowed a metaphor for film from film theorist Siegfried Kracauer. This metaphor sees film as Athena's polished shield in the face of Medusa: it allows one to see a "reflection" of pure horror without being destroyed by it (as one would by witnessing it firsthand).[33] Kracauer's view of the utility and possibility of film in the wake of the Holocaust is well-worth repeating for this study; it articulates Kracauer's reasoning for confronting the difficult and terrifying past on film. Furthermore, it serves as an important capstone on the discussion of the Holocaust, public history, and film:

> The mirror reflections of horror are an end in themselves. As such they beckon the spectator to take them in and thus incorporate into his memory the real face of things too dreadful to be beheld in reality. In experiencing the rows of calves' heads or the

30 Emphasizing this difference is especially important when discussing cable and streaming provider-produced productions with Germans, who are often unfamiliar with the peculiarities of the German television landscape compared to Anglophone or other European countries. German television, while publicly funded, often suffers due to an overwhelming amount of formulaic programs geared towards older audiences. So-called "quality TV" is slowly but surely starting to return to the German small screen. See *Babylon Berlin* (2017) and *Hindafing* (2017), to name a few.

31 Andrew Urban. "Review of Legends of Deadwood." *The Journal of American History* 94.1 (2007): 224-231.

32 Alison Landsberg, *Engaging the Past: Mass Culture and the Production of Historical Knowledge* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 61-62.

33 Insdorf, *Indelible Shadows,* xvii.

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> litter of tortured human bodies in the films made of the Nazi concentration camps, we redeem horror from its invisibility behind the veils of panic and imagination. And this experience is liberating in as much as it removes a most powerful taboo. Perhaps Perseus' greatest achievement was not to cut off Medusa's head but to overcome his fears and look at its reflection in the shield. And was it not precisely this feat which permitted him to behead the monster?[34]

In light of high-quality television productions like *Conspiracy,* among others, it is worth reiterating Anton Kaes' reapplication of Kracauer's quote to this era: Perseus' shield is no longer a cinematic canvas. It is a television (or tablet, laptop) screen.[35] Films are significant for public historians because they attract large audiences, spawn public debates, especially in the press, and often serve as a "gateway" to history for their audiences. By seeing film as mere entertainment or a purely profit-driven enterprise, historians and educators can miss out on how film can enter into historiographical conversations and ignore how it influences mass audiences. After all, audiences will watch historical films and television series regardless of whether or not they have the historians' seal of approval. The following sections will now turn to a production history of *Conspiracy* and the archival material mentioned earlier in order to analyze how filmmakers create historical films. Using this material illustrates the film's conception, writing process, and the work of several historical consultants and advisers. It also permits analysis of *Conspiracy* on all three levels of historical film analysis outlined by Toplin.[36]

A Production History of *Conspiracy*

Conspiracy dramatizes The Wannsee Conference by recreating it in real time; the conference lasted ninety minutes, so does the film. The plot is grounded in the surviving meeting minutes, but most of the dialogue is invented. *Conspiracy* focuses on how educated men in the prime of their lives met in a charming villa to discuss the logistics of mass murder. The camera rarely leaves the meeting table, and its documentary-style techniques, including eye-level placement and the use of long takes and close-ups, place the audience at the meeting rather than at a more distanced vantage point. Unlike most other Holocaust films, it portrays no victims, it tugs at no heartstrings. The men joke about the effects of gassing Jews to death, they get drunk, they allow petty jealousies and institutional rivalries to

34 Siegfried Kracauer. *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1960), 306.

35 Anton Kaes. "History and Film: Public Memory in the Age of Electronic Dissemination." *History and Memory* 2.1 (1990): 117.

36 Toplin, "Cinematic History: Where Do We Go From Here?," 86-87.

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surface. Additionally, the film explicitly references the Wannsee Protocol and its constructed nature, ranging from scenes mentioning the Protocol itself to instances of Eichmann ordering his stenographer to stop transcribing the meeting at key moments. One such moment occurs when SS Major Rudolf Lange implores the attendees to drop the veneer of "evacuation," a euphemism for mass murder.[37] There are no heroes in this film for the audience to identify with; there is no uplifting message or happy ending. It is a film utterly devoid of sentimentality. The film portrays key personalities of the Third Reich, most notably those of Reinhard Heydrich and Adolf Eichmann, but it also explores the power struggles between different institutions. In doing so, the film raises questions about the Wannsee Conference and the Holocaust as well as the dangers and final consequences of far-right politics.

Conspiracy is not the first filmic adaptation of the Wannsee Conference. It follows in the footsteps of a 1984 West German/Austrian film, *Die Wannseekonferenz*, which stood out among a wave of historical television productions in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Although *Conspiracy* initially began as an idea for an English-language remake of *Die Wannseekonferenz*, the two films are similar on only a surface level. They both reflect historiographical trends during the decades in which they were produced and are attempts to make that historiography and history accessible to wide audiences. In 1984, *Die Wannseekonferenz* premiered on the West German network ARD. Written by the trained-historian-turned-screenwriter Paul Mommertz and directed by Heinz Schirk, *Die Wannseekonferenz* stood out for its uncompromising depiction of Nazi perpetrators from a German point of view. This earlier film is characterized by its astounding level of detail, intricate German dialogue, and recreation of the Wannsee Conference in real time. Although it suffers from the low budgets of West German public television in the early 1980s, the film still holds up today, particularly for German speakers. After a scathing review by the *Der Spiegel* journalist Heinz Höhne, Mommertz responded with a spirited defense of his film.[38] In contrast with *Conspiracy*, the earlier film

37 Simone Gigliotti. "Commissioning Mass Murder: Conspiracy and History at the Wannsee Conference," in *Repicturing the Second World War: Representations in Film and Television*, ed. by Michael Paris (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 129.

38 See Mommertz's account of the dispute and his bibliography on "Paul Mommertz | Wannseekonferenz," URL: http://www.paul-mommertz.de/wannseekonferenz01.html (accessed August 15, 2019). Heinz Höhne is best known in the Anglophone world for his history of the SS, *The Order of the Death's Head: The Story of Hitler's SS*, 1967. Contemporary historians have criticized Höhne for uncritically accepting the statements of former SS members that he had befriended in the course of his research. See Karsten Wilke. *Die "Hilfsgemeinschaft auf Gegenseitigkeit" (HIAG) 1950 - 1990. Veteranen der Waffen-SS in der Bundesrepublik* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2011), 388.

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focuses strongly on Hitler's role in the Holocaust, reflecting the so-called "intentionalist" historiographic trend popular in the 1970s and early 1980s.[39]

The Director: Frank Pierson

At the behest of Peter Zinner, Austrian exile and later editor of *Conspiracy*, director Frank Pierson first watched *Die Wannseekonferenz* in the mid-1990s and, according to screenwriter Loring Mandel, it "didn't move [Pierson] to tears, but moved him to anger." Recreating the Wannsee Conference quickly became a passion project.[40] That same year, Pierson met with HBO executives Bob Cooper and Michael Fuchs, who agreed to produce an English-language version for "a new generation." At this time, the project was simply titled *Wannsee*.[41] According to Loring Mandel, Pierson approached him after viewing *Die Wannseekonferenz* and asked him to draft a screenplay for HBO.[42] Mandel and Pierson had worked together on *Citizen Cohn*, an HBO movie about the McCarthy era. Shortly after signing on to *Wannsee*, Mandel and Pierson became attached to *Complicity*, another historical drama set during WWII. *Complicity* was a pet project of Colin Callender, then head of HBO NYC Productions, which managed the *Wannsee* project. *Complicity* explored Allied indifference towards the fate of European Jewry in the face of overwhelming evidence. Callender decided to combine the two projects into companion films.[43] As film and television critic Alan Sepinwall has noted, the 1990s and early 2000s were a time when "If you wanted thoughtful drama for adults, you didn't go to the multiplex; you went to your living room couch."[44] HBO had further invested in original film by forming HBO NYC Productions, a company

39 At the end of *Die Wannseekonferenz*, Kritzinger and Stuckart discuss which pages of *Mein Kampf* argue that Jews should be killed with poison gas. Furthermore, a bust of Hitler lingers in the background of the conference room throughout the film. Note that the debate between "intentionalism" and "functionalism" has largely fallen by the wayside, but during the 1980s and 1990s, it was the subject of fierce debate among historians of the Holocaust and twentieth-century Germany. Most historians today tend to combine a mixture of both viewpoints. For a discussion of intentionalism, see Charles S. Maier. *The Unmasterable Past: History, Holocaust, and German National Identity* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1988). Chapter 3, "A Holocaust like the Others? Problems of Comparative History."

40 Alexander Tang. "A Conversation with Loring Mandel." *The Harvard Crimson*. November 12, 2013, URL: http://www.thecrimson.com/article/2013/11/12/interview-loringmandel/ (accessed November 12, 2019).

41 Frank Pierson, Letter to Stanley Scheinbaum, 1.

42 Tang, "A Conversation with Loring Mandel."

43 Pierson, Letter to Stanley Scheinbaum, 1.

44 Alan Sepinwall, *The Revolution Was Televised: The Cops, Crooks, Slingers, and Slayers Who Changed TV Drama Forever* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2013), 7-9, 102.

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whose goal was to "[produce] 'edgier and more diverse'" programming.[45] HBO NYC Productions produced *Conspiracy* and *Complicity*[46] during the early stages of the writing process and continued to do so until it eventual merged with HBO Films. HBO Films made a name for itself by producing quality original programming that simultaneously embodied and subverted established genres; it actively sought to be the "auteur studio of the nineties."[47] HBO Films sought to "make us nervous" with "fearless" and "provocative" programming by examining controversial issues that traditional broadcast networks actively avoided. According to *The Essential HBO Reader*, a scholarly examination of HBO's history, HBO's "most notable" productions "negotiate the past and interrogate cultural memory through the depiction of individual lives that are positioned at the center of national struggles, community conflicts, social movements, and scandals."[48] Furthermore, these productions usually avoid the clichéd uplifting moral lessons and happy endings common to programming on other networks.[49] Instead, HBO's historical productions often use history to impart "lessons" to the audience.[50] *Conspiracy* certainly fits this description and is a typical example of HBO's output during the turn of the millennium. Additionally, *Conspiracy* was part of a wave of television and film productions during this period produced with the fiftieth anniversary of World War II in mind, including HBO's miniseries *Band of Brothers*, which also aired in 2001.

In a preface to *Conspiracy*, director Frank Pierson outlined the film's key features:

> At Wannsee, near Berlin, the plan [coordinating the so-called Final Solution] was outlined and Germany's ruling bureaucrats were given their instructions. The meeting's atmosphere was like a corporate board meeting. In "Conspiracy," the meeting at Wannsee – a beautiful lakeside mansion confiscated from a Jewish family – is dramatically recreated from the actual minutes of the meeting, written and edited by the then obscure Lt Col Adolf Eichmann and General Heydrich, himself.
>
> The meeting lasted approximately an hour and a half. Certainly, in that period, these men were not always at their best and always on the point. There are moments of lightness, moments of hostility, plenty of defensiveness, a few moments when the subtext is utterly revealed, and much self-protective game-playing. I want, too, to show how,

45 Dana Heller, "Films," in *The Essential HBO Reader*, ed. by Gary R. Edgerton and Jeffery P. Jones (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2013), 42-51. 43.

46 Note that HBO eventually dropped the *Complicity* project, possibly for political reasons. For a detailed discussion of this project's cancellation, see Nicholas K. Johnson, "HBO and the Holocaust: Conspiracy, the Historical Film, and Public History at Wannsee," 37-42.

47 Heller, "Films", 44-45.

48 Heller, "Films", 46.

49 Heller, "Films", 46

50 Heller, "Films", 50.

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> in any individual, cruelty and sociopathology can coexist with the sappiest sentimentality.[51]

In Pierson's preface, which functions as a sort of outline of the film and its unproduced sequel, *Complicity*, he touches on several overarching themes. The most prominent is the incongruity of the Wannsee Conference's purpose with that of its location and manner – a charming lakeside villa where Nazi functionaries, as Mark Roseman has noted, "[spoke] to one another with great politeness, sipping their cognac, [they] really had cleared the way for genocide."[52] The sheer banality of what Pierson describes as "a corporate board meeting" does not fit with our preconceived notions of how the Holocaust unfolded and confronts us with our own ideas about what evil truly is. Indeed, the image of the Nazi as the quintessential "desk murderer" (*Schreibtischtäter)* is a trope that the filmmakers were keenly aware of, utilized, and responded to in the film, with Stanley Tucci's portrayal of Adolf Eichmann being the most notable and important example. An early comment from Pierson on Eichmann's character argued that Eichmann should fool the audience into underestimating him, because "Heydrich may be the architect, but Eichmann as the carpenter and plasterer is the man who will do it."[53] As evidenced by earlier discussion, and the final film, the filmmakers honed in on this subtext and made it one of the film's two major historiographical arguments. For them, Wannsee was the moment where Eichmann became a major player, even if he later denied it, and even if other, higher-ranking conference attendees underestimated him. This choice is further revealed by Eichmann's introductory scenes focusing on a meticulous and ruthless figure obsessed with numbers, especially a scene in which Eichmann instructs butlers to "itemize the costs" for broken china and ensure that the butler who had broken said china pay for all of it.[54] Nevertheless, the film does not only portray the conference participants as "desk murderers." Eberhard Schöngarth and Rudolf Lange, both highly educated leaders of *Einsatzgruppen*, exemplify what Heydrich dubbed his "fighting administration" (*kämpfende Verwaltung*), those SD functionaries who combined bureau-

51 Frank Pierson. "Preface," April 28, 1998, Box 6, Folder 7, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 1.

52 Mark Roseman, *The Villa, The Lake, The Meeting: Wannsee and the Final Solution* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 107.

53 Loring Mandel and Frank Pierson. "Commented Version of Conspiracy: The Meeting at Wannsee, 1st Draft" December 18, 1996, Box 2, Folder 9, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 6.

54 Loring Mandel. "*Conspiracy* by Loring Mandel, with Scene Numbers, 5/19/01" May 19, 2001, Box 1, Folder 6, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 3.

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cratic expertise with what the Wannsee Protocol ominously refers to as "practical experience."[55] In this respect, the film plays to – and then subverts – preconceived notions about Holocaust perpetrators. The characters in *Conspiracy*, with the exception of the inexplicably obese Gerhard Klopfer, are no "diabolical-psychopathic beasts," contrary to claims still advanced by historians.[56]

Pierson's preface also focuses on the rivalries between institutions and individuals within the Nazi state, which counters the stereotypical image of an efficient, top-down bureaucracy carrying out Hitler's orders to the letter. Later in the preface, Pierson characterizes the conference as "primarily for the purpose of consolidating [Heydrich's] power as the sole commander of the *Final Solution.* The various ministries of the *Reich* had been dealing with the "Jewish Question" in various ad hoc ways…"[57] This characterization of various ministries jockeying for position fits with the *functionalist* historiographical school first made popular in the 1980s and 1990s.

It is important to note that this preface also contains a factually incorrect statement that the filmmakers removed from later script drafts (at the behest of historical advisor Andrea Axelrod and Norbert Kampe, then-director of the Wannsee Conference Memorial): the villa did not belong to a Jewish family, but instead to the industrialist Ernst Malier and later, the fraudulent businessman Friedrich Minoux. As a consequence of his imprisonment and financial difficulties, Minoux sold the villa to an SS front group (*Stiftung Nordhav*), which is how it became SS and SD property.[58]

One key point made by Pierson that sums up the view he and Mandel had of film as history as well as their goal with *Conspiracy* appears in a 1997 letter that he wrote to producer Frank Doelger. The production team had been arguing back and forth over whether to make the historical narrative clearer to the audience, in other words, to spell it out for them. In response, Pierson argued that such tactics would reduce the project to "dry documentary" and that this defeated the purpose of the film.[59] For Pierson, the audience's emotional response to the film

55 Mark Roseman. "Appendix A: Translation of the Protocol," in *The Villa, The Lake, The Meeting: Wannsee and the Final Solution* (London: Allen Lane, 2002), 111.

56 Hans-Christian Jasch and Christoph Kreutzmüller. "Die Teilnehmer: Die Männer der Wannsee-Konferenz", ed. by Hans-Christian Jasch and Christoph Kreutzmüller (Berlin: Metropol, 2017), 13-14.

57 Pierson, "Preface," 1.

58 For the history of the Villa itself, see Johannes Tuchel. *Am Grossen Wannsee 56-58: Von der Villa Minoux zum Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1992), and Michael Haupt. *Das Haus der Wannsee-Konferenz: Von der Industriellenvilla zur Gedenkstätte* (Berlin: Haus der Wannseekonferenz, 2009).

59 Frank Pierson. "Frank Pierson to Frank Doelger," August 15, 1997, Box 11, Folder 4, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin Madison, Madison, Wisconsin.

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was paramount: the audience should be "getting angry and it should be emotional."[60] Showing a historical event was more important than exposition via voiceover narration: "We are almost always up against the tendency to move the subtext into text – which is the exact opposite of drama."[61] This tension between the needs of drama and the imparting of historical truths cuts to the heart of the dilemma faced by filmmakers or historians trying to produce historical films. Many ideas that sound good at first, especially to educators and historians, such as an overabundance of expository narration or dialogue that provides background information throughout the film or on-screen text as characters are introduced, can hamper a film's quality. Pierson's commitment to showing rather than telling also places *Conspiracy* firmly in the camp of HBO's "difficult" dramas of the early 2000s like *The Wire* and *Deadwood* – series notorious for eschewing exposition and dropping the viewer in an unfamiliar world and storyline. Furthermore, *Conspiracy* makes villains the main characters – an uncommon practice in 2001. HBO's *The Sopranos* is a notable example of television succeeding at this, albeit in a much different way than *Conspiracy*. Indeed, Frank Pierson argued that "[t]he one truly different, shocking and original aspect of Conspiracy is presenting (in a sense) the Holocaust from the Nazi point of view."[62]

Loring Mandel's Screenplay

Loring Mandel's first script draft, titled *Conspiracy: The Meeting at Wannsee* shows that Mandel spent a large amount of time researching material related to the Wannsee Conference and its participants. The Wannsee Protocol itself is the most important source Mandel consulted, and a few lines of dialogue illustrate that. However, it is important to remember that the Protocol is not a verbatim transcript of the meeting, but a heavily edited summary that depends on bureaucratic euphemisms and evasions in order to get its true meaning across. No participant would actually have spoken like the Protocol. Although the bibliography itself is sparse, the script contains forty-seven footnotes; no small number when one realizes that screenplays are much smaller in both page length and word count compared to a book, with the overwhelming majority of text devoted to dialogue. Most of the footnotes provide context to particular statements made by conference participants or serve to provide evidence for opinions held by certain partic-

60 Pierson, "Pierson to Doelger."

61 Pierson, "Pierson to Doelger."

62 Frank Pierson. "Notes for Complicity," February 9, 2001, Box 11, Folder 4, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942- 2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 3.

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ipants that are not recorded in the Wannsee Protocol itself. Mandel has referred to this process of including participants' historical opinions in invented dialogue as "informed speculation."[63] The historian Simone Gigliotti has written at length on Mandel's use of "informed speculation" as a way to fill in gaps in the narrative that is "not entirely dissimilar from historians investigating Wannsee."[64] In his book *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood,* historian Robert Toplin uses the same term: "fictional scenes offer informed speculation – educated guesses about how the ideas and behavior found expression in those unrecorded settings."[65] Mandel's "informed speculation" is largely successful, but not without its problems. While the first draft contains many instances of "informed speculation" and points to specific research that Mandel conducted, more rigorous historical research was yet to come; this took place after HBO renewed its agreement to produce *Conspiracy* after previously cancelling both it and *Complicity*.

In April 2000, Mandel re-submitted his second draft of *Conspiracy: The Meeting at Wannsee* to HBO. By this time, HBO had agreed to produce *Conspiracy* and had relegated *Complicity* to the back burner. This version of the script is mostly unchanged from the first draft; it is the version most commented on by historians serving as consultants, HBO executives, and others involved with the production, but it is important to keep in mind that the producers and various historians provided extensive comments on the scripts since the project's beginning. The earliest comments on this script (as evidenced by the archive) indicate that the production team was well-aware of script's potential shortcomings and sought to make a particular historiographical argument. One version of this script, which contains comments in red from an unknown author (presumably Frank Pierson), contains several passages that indicate the production team's intent. One passage emphasizes the need to avoid caricatures of Nazis that could push the film into B-movie camp:

> [W]e have to avoid demonizing these people who are so damned by their very presence [at Wannsee]… We have to watch out for overkill; the most interesting thing about the whole conference is the dispassionate rationality of it all.[66]

The second point regarding the "dispassionate rationality" of the Wannsee Conference being its most interesting feature is a theme that the production team hit on repeatedly during the writing process. *Conspiracy* is not a standard WWII or Holocaust film; there is no on-screen violence; no action (outside of Heydrich's as-

63 Gigliotti, "Commissioning Mass Murder," 125.

64 Gigliotti, "Commissioning Mass Murder," 127.

65 Robert Brent Toplin. *Reel History: In Defense of Hollywood* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 201.

66 Mandel and Pierson, "Commented Version of Conspiracy: The Meeting at Wannsee, 1st Draft." 6.

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sassination, which does not appear in the final screenplay) takes place. One of the main hurdles the filmmakers had to overcome was how to make a ninety-minute meeting capture and hold an audience's attention. For Pierson, one of the goals was to dramatize Arendt's banality of evil concept itself.[67]

Early comments on the scripts chiefly came from HBO officials like Ani Gasti, Colin Callender, Frank Doelger, and Frank Pierson. The earliest set of available comments (from December 1996, less than one month after the first draft was submitted to HBO), from Colin Callender, then head of HBO NYC Productions (and soon-to-be president of HBO Films), identify *Conspiracy's* two historiographical arguments: 1) The Wannsee Conference was a way to consolidate Reinhard Heydrich's power and, by extension, the leadership of the SS in carrying out the so-called Final Solution; and 2) Wannsee was a turning point in the career of Adolf Eichmann.[68] Callender continues by asking for a more clear explanation of the competition between agencies over the Jewish Question; he emphasizes the fact that there was no clear and "centralized" policy before Wannsee. Callender's comments follow what Holocaust historians broadly refer to as a "functionalist" interpretation of the Holocaust. Callender also wonders if the rise of Eichmann after Wannsee is Heydrich's intention and whether this was decided at the conference.[69] Later versions of the script emphasize Eichmann's ascent in importance as more of an accident of history – for the filmmakers, his position at the conference placed him in the perfect position to carry out the Final Solution. The final draft also emphasizes Heydrich's viewing Eichmann as a sort of awkward and sometimes embarrassing, albeit extremely competent, subordinate; Heydrich becomes irritated with or dismisses Eichmann on occasion. For example, there is a brief scene towards the end of the film when Heydrich asks the attendees to "astonish Charles Darwin" by agreeing to provide him and the SS with their utmost support in carrying out mass murder. The final version of the script notes that Heydrich resents Colonel Eberhard Schöngarth's "deference" toward Eichmann and subsequently "passes over" him when asking for each attendee's agreement to the decisions made at the meeting.[70]

Later comments by Callender and producer Frank Doelger show that the production team was aware of historical invention and sought to avoid it whenever possible. Early character descriptions provided by Mandel included statements that could not be confirmed historically, the most egregious of which being "I've given him some heart" in reference to Major Rudolf Lange, Commander of the

67 Pierson, "Preface," 1.

68 Colin Callender. "Notes/Wannsee," December 6, 1996, Box 10, Folder 7, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942- 2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 1.

69 Callender, "Notes/Wannsee," 1.

70 Mandel, "*Conspiracy*, by Loring Mandel, with Scene Numbers, 5/19/01." 96.

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SD (Security Service) and SiPo (Security Police) in Riga.[71] Callender and Doelger rejected the "I've given him some heart" statement on the grounds that it "suggest[s] a degree of invention that undermines the factual basis of the script."[72] This criticism holds up upon viewing the final film; certain characters, most notably Klopfer, are portrayed in ways that are not supported by the historical record. Not all early comments by the producers were sound. In many instances, they desired unnecessary exposition or wanted to tone down coarser language that they felt sounded "contemporary," including one of Heydrich's most chilling lines in the entire screenplay:

> We will not sterilize every Jew and wait for the race to die. We will not sterilize every Jew and then exterminate them, that's farcical. Dead men don't hump, dead women don't get pregnant; death is the most reliable form of sterilization, put it that way.[73]

In almost every instance of coarse language or harsh vocabulary that emphasizes the gravity of the issues being discussed, the vulgarity of the participants, or shocks the audience in some way, HBO executives tended to err on the side of caution. However, Mandel and Pierson fought for the inclusion of this type of language and it ultimately remained in the final film. In the instance of harsher language producers found "contemporary," the decision to leave it in arguably made the film more accessible. Expunging the dialogue of profanity or explicit statements would bowdlerize the film and lend it a *Masterpiece Theater* aesthetic that would do a disservice to the subject matter.

Historical Advisors

Three historians, including a full-time researcher hired by HBO, provided extensive commentary on the script and offered a myriad of suggestions for improving its historical accuracy and historical argument. Michael Berenbaum of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum was the film's credited historical consultant, and the amount of comments he submitted attests to that. However, Andrea Axelrod, credited as the film's historical advisor, clearly conducted much more research and put forth a much larger effort than has been previously acknowledged in the press or in various publications which reference Berenbaum as if he were the project's sole historical advisor. The production team also consulted Holocaust

71 Mandel, "Conspiracy: The Meeting at Wannsee, 1st Draft." ii.

72 Colin Callender and Frank Doelger. "Notes Conspiracy - Complicity," June 28, 1997, Box 10, Folder 9, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 1.

73 Mandel, "*Conspiracy*, by Loring Mandel, with Scene Numbers, 5/19/01." 59.

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historian Christopher Browning, who provided brief comments on an early script draft.[74]

The earliest commentary from a historian came in the form of a letter from Michael Berenbaum in 1998. Berenbaum bluntly opened with: "The script doesn't make it. The Wannsee Conference is inherently undramatic." He was more partial to *Complicity* and offered extended commentary on it in this document.[75] Berenbaum then commented on various things that he thought needed correcting in the *Conspiracy* screenplay. Notably, he emphasized the importance of the age of the respective characters, who were all relatively young men.[76] By July 2000, Berenbaum was mostly satisfied with the script. However, he advocated several changes in a somewhat rambling document that HBO executives, Frank Pierson, and Loring Mandel were clearly unhappy with. In a few instances, he argued for changes to make the film easier, in his opinion, for the audience to comprehend. However, one of these changes involved removing Heydrich's following line: "[H]istory will mark us for having the gift and the will to advance the human race to greater purity in a space of time so short that Charles Darwin would be astonished."[77] For Berenbaum, this statement was too much for an audience to handle, and he thought that the reference to Darwin should be removed or contextualized with a scene depicting a private conversation between Heydrich, Müller, and Eichmann referencing "survival of the fittest."[78] Needless to say, this "creative comment"[79] as Pierson put it, did not go over well. In a large internal memo detailing how the production team was responding to comments, criticism, and suggestions from all three historians involved with the project, the producers answered Berenbaum's suggestion by stating: "The Darwin reference remains in script. Poor practice to assume that the audience is insufficiently educated."[80] This

74 Christopher Browning. Letter to Ani Gasti, August 22, 2000, Box 10, Folder 7, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin.

75 Michael Berenbaum. Letter to Frank Doelger, February 5, 1998, Box 10, Folder 7, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 1.

76 Berenbaum, April 1998 Letter to Frank Doelger, 2.

77 Loring Mandel. "Conspiracy: The Meeting at Wannsee, an Original Drama" April 19, 2000, Box 3, Folder 4, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 90.

78 Michael Berenbaum. Letter to Frank Doelger, July 5, 2000, Box 10, Folder 7, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 1-2.

79 Berenbaum, July 2000 Letter to Frank Doelger, 2. Note inserted and signed by Pierson directly under Berenbaum's text.

80 Ani Gasti. "Conspiracy: The Meeting at Wannsee - Notes Review," October 2, 2000, Box 10, Folder 7, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 11.

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refusal to assume that their audience would be "insufficiently educated" is one of *Conspiracy's* strengths. As with other HBO dramas, little is spelled out for the viewer, and much of the plot is conveyed through subtle turns of phrase or facial expressions. In this sense, the film treats its audience like adults. The idea that historians should "dumb down" history for non-specialist audiences in order to make it palatable or inoffensive is one that most history educators and public historians are familiar with. Rather than "dumbing down" complicated histories for wider audiences, public history is partially an exercise in translation – one is able to tell exceedingly complicated histories by employing language appropriate to the audience. In this respect, both historians and filmmakers face similar challenges when writing narratives.

After HBO renewed its commitment to the *Conspiracy* project, it hired Andrea Axelrod to conduct full-time research and fact check Mandel's script. She provided the most extensive amount of commentary and additional research for *Conspiracy*. The majority of Axelrod's input took place after April 2000. She was very familiar with the historiography of the Third Reich and the Wannsee Conference. Around a month before shooting commenced, Axelrod provided a document that managed to provide citations for most scenes, lines, or other statements within the script. In total, the document provides almost 170 citations for a script totaling a little over one hundred pages, a much larger figure than the number of footnotes visible in the earlier drafts of the script itself. The citations include sources, comments, questions, and notes if a particular line or scene has no basis in the historical record. Axelrod cites a plethora of sources, the most important of course being the Wannsee Protocol and Eichmann's trial transcripts, evidence gathered for the Nuremberg Trials, biographies of conference participants, conversations with members of the Wannsee Memorial Museum staff, and works by German and Anglophone historians like Claudia Koonz, Christopher Browning, Raul Hillberg, Günther Deschner, Hans Mommsen, and others.[81] With few exceptions, the cited works are all academic – rather than popular – histories. Axelrod's efforts show that historical films are not uniformly "entertainment" vehicles that ignore historical "facts." It is also important to keep in mind that these are internal documents – the audience, including critics, did not have access to them; there was no need for HBO to conduct this level of research and fact-checking if it were just about them being able to slap the boilerplate "this film is based on a true story" phrase onto a title card. It is also hard to argue that making their sources and bibliographies available would have been possible in an era before the Internet's ubiquity.[82]

81 Andrea Axelrod. "Sources for September 13, 2000 Script," September 13, 2000, Box 10, Folder 8, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin.

82 Contrast the early 2000s with our current era, in which screenwriter Craig Mazin (of HBO's 2019 miniseries *Chernobyl)* listed all of his sources on Twitter, made his screenplays available on

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Furthermore, footnoting and fact-checking scripts to this degree is not a standard practice in the film industry.

In an earlier document, Axelrod provided the production team with a script review. In this document, she vastly expanded the number and depth of citations that Mandel himself had provided. She even contacted the German Weather Service to find out if snow blanketed the Wannsee area on 20 January 1942. The script review also confirms that Axelrod collaborated with Gaby M. Oelrichs, then head librarian at the Gedenkstätte Haus der Wannseekonferenz.[83] The script review references then-recent developments in historiography, including whether or not the SS had confiscated the Wannsee Villa from a wealthy Jew.[84] It would be impossible to exhaustively list every aspect of the script that Axelrod found evidence for, but it includes tidbits like whether Heydrich would have shuffled his note cards (yes, he liked to adlib) or to which attendees Stuckart would be likely to complain about the large SS presence at the meeting.[85] Axelrod cites a range of what was then cutting-edge Holocaust scholarship from both the Anglosphere and Germany, most notably Hans Mommsen's work on the Civil Service and the Holocaust, which emphasizes a weakened Civil Service that took a backseat to SS domination.[86] It is important to note that not all of Axelrod's objections were taken into account, notably one she had to the conflict between Wilhelm Stuckart and Gerhard Klopfer, a conflict which has no basis in reality and instead seems to use the two as avatars of the Civil Service and the Party, respectively, in order to give the audience insight into the tangled rivalries among agencies and power-holders during the Third Reich.[87] This hypothesis is the only way the film's heated conflict between Stuckart and Klopfer makes even a bit of sense, as both men not only knew each other, but had collaborated on a journal that dealt with "ethnically based constitution and administration." In other words, on a project that was clearly grounded in a shared understanding of race.[88] Although the production team ignored a few of Axelrod's critiques – most notably the one

his website, and produced a companion podcast in which he discussed exactly which aspects of his scripts were fictionalized and if so, why. See HBO, "Chernobyl," URL: https://www.hbo.com/chernobyl (accessed November 12, 2019) for the scripts and podcast. See https://twitter.com/clmazin/status/1135766541843066880 for a partial bibliography.

83 Andrea Axelrod. "Conspiracy: Script Review," June 23, 2000, Box 10, Folder 8, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942- 2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 2.

84 Axelrod, "Conspiracy: Script Review," 7.

85 Axelrod, "Conspiracy: Script Review," 13.

86 Andrea Axelrod, "Overall Issues Part II," June 23, 2000, Box 10, Folder 8, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942- 2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 1.

87 Axelrod, "Overall Issues Part II," 4.

88 Roseman, *The Villa, the Lake, the Meeting*, 90.

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about the invented conflict between Klopfer and Stuckart – the majority of her criticisms and suggestions made their way into the final film. A few months after Axelrod wrote this document, *Conspiracy* completed filming in London and Berlin and would air in the US the following spring.

Conclusions

Conspiracy is by no means the only historical film that public historians can find valuable. Nevertheless, it serves as an important case study for "doing history" on film. This article has engaged with *Conspiracy* on all three levels of Toplin's rubric for film analysis. In contrast to most other explorations of history and film, this study has investigated a film archive in order to see what the filmmakers actually thought; one now has evidence of their intent and how they constructed their historiographical arguments. Although not a replacement for a historical monograph, *Conspiracy* is more than a dramatic movie with the Wannsee Conference as window dressing. The film engages with historiography, argues that the conference represented a turning point in the direction of the Final Solution, challenges the stereotypical image of Adolf Eichmann, and manages to do so in real time. As Mark Roseman has noted, Wannsee is a "kind of keyhole, through which we can glimpse the emerging Final Solution."[89] *Conspiracy* views Wannsee in a similar manner, with its "you-are-there" cinematography and reliance on the nuances of language to tell its story. *Conspiracy*, although flawed, serves as an excellent example of the possibilities of historical film and if more filmmakers and historians looked to it for inspiration, the landscape of historical filmmaking would be richer. Until *Son of Saul*, *Conspiracy* was one of the most notable Holocaust dramas utterly devoid of sentimentality and schmaltz, one of the typical charges faced by the genre. *Conspiracy* (and its German predecessor) is unique because it manages to convey the horror and scale of the Holocaust without showing a single violent act. It portrays the "unexplainable" by showing the audience a group of middle-aged and young men meeting over lunch – and it does so without holding the audience's hand by using title cards (except for the final scene) or exposition. Andrea Axelrod summed up the central tenets of the film in one of her many comments on the script review process:

> Making this into a classroom history lesson is not going to work [this is in response to a suggestion to "describe the historical significance of the meeting in an opening caption"]….The dramatic situation here is a bunch of people are gathered together for a purpose they do not know, but that frightens them because – having been summonsed

89 Roseman, *The Villa, the Lake, the Meeting*, 79.

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> [sic] by an authority of which they are terrified – their lives will not be the same after. It is *Waiting for Godot*, only Godot actually comes. When he does he is not as they thought he would be. This is the drama of the piece. The more we add explanations and clarity and add historical footnotes [on screen] the more we undercut the very strength of the drama we want to tell. But, but, but – the banality of evil. We must also avoid the pitfalls of conventional dramatization: dramatic revelations, bold confrontations, big turning points, gasping denouements: everything is very small, ordinary, and even silly.…the drama of [*Conspiracy*] is how the worst crime of history was done by ordinary men, worried about the weather and their jobs [sic] security, their digestion and their sex lives, their dog and their wife.[90]

In short, the filmmakers did not seek to create a didactic film in order to simply "teach" the history of the Wannsee Conference to an ignorant, passive audience. If we are to teach or engage with difficult subject matter, it is important that the films we use to do so be just as difficult. Difficult history requires difficult art.

Most importantly, this essay has demonstrated that dramatic film can be a public history and educative method and should be treated as such; films are not mere entertainment or money-making vehicles. Film is one of the most powerful and accessible methods available to historians and should thus be taken seriously as both an art form and as a historical method. Historians need to expand their methodological toolkits to include film analysis, and yes, even filmmaking, if they hope to remain relevant to twenty-first century audiences used to a primarily video-based method of learning. YouTube now hosts excellent historical content that would have been unthinkable a decade ago.[91] Online streaming services like Netflix have bypassed the television broadcast model and use their subscription revenue to create dramas of their own; several critically-acclaimed historical dramas have already premiered online. The future of the historical film – outside of the Hollywood studio system, which has largely retreated into escapist superhero blockbusters and endless sequels – seems bright.

Finally, *Conspiracy* takes ninety minutes to explore a very difficult history in a largely uncompromising fashion. Little is spelled out for the audience, the film requires one's full attention, much like other HBO fare at the turn of the millenium. The history presented by *Conspiracy* is profoundly unsettling and disturbing. As public historians, it is imperative that we confront difficult pasts and make them known and comprehendible to wider audiences. Whether through German efforts at *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* or recent efforts to explore America's often-ignored slaveholding past, it is up to historians and yes, filmmakers, to ensure that the

90 Andrea Axelrod, "Combined Notes on 4/19/00 Draft," 2000, Box 10, Folder 8, Loring Mandel Papers, 1942-2006, M2006-124, Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, Wisconsin. 1.

91 See "The Great War," URL: https://www.youtube.com/user/TheGreatWar (accessed November 12, 2019).

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darker aspects of history are not forgotten and replaced with whitewashed, comforting tales often encountered in the public sphere and advocated by the current crop of extreme right-wing movements around the world. If "never again" was the watchword post-1945, films like *Conspiracy*, which illustrate the sheer ordinariness of the people and events that shaped some of the worst crimes in history, serve as valuable warnings from a not-so-distant past about our own "ordinary" time. The past can be unsettling – and our depictions of such pasts should be as well.

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Demonstrating, representing, or showing is at the heart of every educational action. Historical representations on screen and stage do not "teach" us history but rather influence our ideas and interpretations of it. The contributions to this volume explore the depiction of history in theater and film from the intersection of historical scholarship, aesthetics, memory studies, and education. They examine the creation of historical images, film production and reception, the scriptwriting process, educational programming, and depictions of German-American encounters. Above all else, they explore how various theatrical and filmic productions *show* history rather than *tell* it.

Studien zur Deutsch-Amerikanischen Bildungsgeschichte / Studies in German-American Educational History

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